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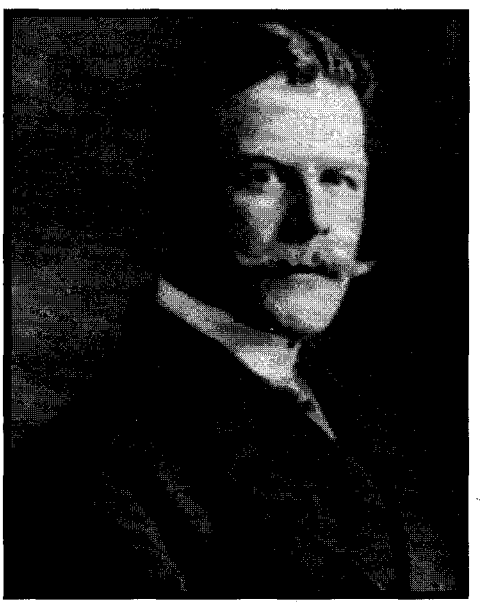
The Man Who Gave Us the Drug War

Dr. Hamilton Wright was famous for his discovery that beriberi is an infectious disease. It isn't. It's a vitamin deficiency but by the time his error was uncovered he had already married well. Very well in fact – to the daughter of Senator W.D. Washburn, head of the Republican Party.

When Dr. Wright moved to Washington his new father-in-law got him a job as a delegate to the Chinese Opium Commission of 1909. This conference, aimed at helping the Chinese with their opium problem, was billed as an American good will gesture. The actual intent was to pull the rug out from under the British and open China's vast markets to US merchants.



But Dr. Wright, who always suspected he was destined for greatness, took the assignment seriously and by the time he returned from China he had persuaded himself that opium addiction was a global scourge. His mission would be to save the world from the evil of narcotics.

He faced daunting odds. The other key players—England, France, the Netherlands did not share Wright's horror of opium. A British study had recently concluded that opium addiction was no worse than alcoholism and maybe not as bad. But Wright's moral certainty finally carried the day on Capitol Hill. Badgering superiors and threatening foreign ambassadors, Wright managed to get the State Department to convene two follow-on conferences at Hague in spite of resistance from almost every other nation involved.

In the end they all caved in and agreed to control cultivation, manufacture, and distribution of narcotics. Wright was able to achieve this stunning reversal through simple deception. At The Hague he said that the United States was demanding narcotics control, then back in Washington he squeezed Congress with fabricated demands from The Hague.

The U.S. legislation that Wright engineered finally made it through Congress in the winter of 1914 and at first glance the Harrison Narcotics Act appeared to be just a means of gathering information. It called on everybody in the drug trade to purchase a license and keep precise records. The bill passed in minutes. The New York Times didn't even mention it.

But Hamilton Wright had installed a land mine in the language, an extra clause that enabled federal agents to decree that all narcotics addicts should go cold turkey. Most addicts at the time were productive citizens with jobs, homes and a medical problem. Overnight they went from patients to criminals.

Today, as a direct result of using lawmen to supervise doctors we have 30 million Americans undertreated for chronic pain. And what did we get in return? After spending $1 trillion over the last 90 years the rate of narcotics addiction in the US has increased 500 percent.

Common Sense for Drug Policy
www.CommonSenseDrugPolicy.org www.DrugWarFacts.org
www.ManagingChronicPain.org www.MedicalMJ.org
www.TreatingDrugAddiction.org
info@csdp.org

Text excerpted from *Drug Crazy*, Mike Gray, Random House 1998

Photo credit: from the book Drug War: Covert Money, Power & Policy by Dan Russell

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
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THE NEW REPUBLIC
A JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND THE ARTS

AUGUST 14 & 21, 2006 WASHINGTON, D.C. ISSUES 4,778 & 4,779 VOLUME 235

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COVER ILLUSTRATION BY *Jason Holley*

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CORRESPONDENCE

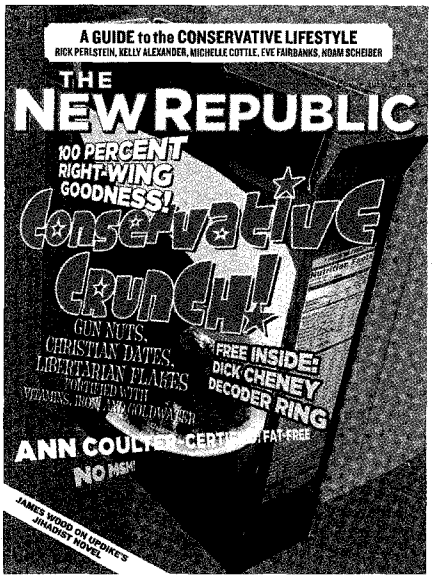
CON HOT AIR

I APPLAUD YOUR JULY 3 ISSUE ON the culture of conservatism. As a self-identified conservative, I have often wondered what contributes to the recent follies of our movement—the Iraq war and the clearly illegal domestic surveillance program, to name only the most egregious. I knew the answer lay in the mindset of many conservatives. The problem is that, especially for those taking their cues from Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh, we conservatives are often guided more by being against liberals than by truly sensible ideas. It's a testament to the flawed nature of human beings that ideologues like Ann Coulter rather than measured thinkers like George F. Will set the tone of discourse in conservative circles.

The run-up to the Iraq war is the most clear example of this mindset. I myself admit to being swept up in the general anti-European, anti-U.N., and anti-dove hysteria propagated by the pro-Bush camp. As I think back to those times, the most convincing argument for the war was that many Democrats and liberals opposed it. Today, I am ashamed for having reasoned in this manner. In any case, your articles in this issue illuminated this mindset very well while avoiding outright demonization of conservatives as a whole. Nonetheless, let me suggest that this way of thinking is unavoidable. Human nature, particularly when given free rein in a democratic system, will tend toward passion rather than reason. Thus, conservatives prefer to disparage liberals rather than provide insight of their own. Certainly, the left wing in U.S. politics has a similar modus operandi. Just look at *Huffington Post* to see examples of wildly anti-Bush fervor.

OSKAR CHOMICKI
Irving, Texas

IN HIS CONDEMNATION OF CONSERvatism as a movement that likes to wallow in self-pity, Rick Perlstein decides—based on blurbs by Jesse Helms and William F. Buckley Jr.—that my book, *Free Choice for Workers: A History of the Right to Work Movement*,


A GUIDE to the CONSERVATIVE LIFESTYLE
RICK PERLSTEIN, KELLY ALEXANDER, MICHELLE COTTLE, EVE FAIRBANKS, NOAM SCHEIBER
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100 PERCENT RIGHT-WING GOODNESS!
Conservative Crunch!
GUN NUTS, CHRISTIAN DATES, LIBERTARIAN FLAKES
FREE INSIDE: DICK CHENEY DECODER RING
ANN COULTER
FAT-FREE
JAMES WOOD ON UPDIKE'S JIHADIST NOVEL

is conservative ("Mass Martyr," July 3). First, I'm a libertarian, not a conservative. The fact that some conservatives agree with my position on compulsory unionism doesn't make right-to-work a "conservative" issue. Second, the book is neither pro-business nor anti-union. The subject is the right-to-work movement, which brings together people from many different political parties and beliefs who agree that union representation should be a matter of individual choice. If Perlstein had read my book, he would have found out that the nucleus of the right-to-work movement in the early '50s was a group of railroad union members who objected to being compelled to remain members in order to keep their jobs. He would have also found out that the victims of union violence and coercion are people like waitresses and construction workers—the "little guys"—who don't do exactly what union bosses want them to do.

Why is it that left-interventionists like Perlstein are apparently indifferent to union coercion? I submit that it's because unions are good at uttering stock egalitarian phrases and send lots of money and manpower into campaigns to elect liberal politicians. That earns Big Labor a free pass on its coercion, exactly as conservatives are prone to give dictators a free pass on their human rights abuses as long as they are officially allies of the U.S. government. Sure, conservatives like to play the martyr. So do liberals. In fact, no group is better at it than the unions, which treat any proposal to reduce their extraordinary legal privileges as a chance to scream that the sky is falling.

GEORGE C. LEEF
Raleigh, North Carolina

BED OF MEMORIES

KEVIN PRUFER'S BRILLIANT, PERfect poem, "Dead Soldier," brought back to me—a young bride, then—my beautiful, jet-pilot Marine's death as if it were today (July 3). Even after 47 years, I find that my love and I are in this poem—he sleeping in the "narrow bed" in heaven and I in a "narrow bed" without him. Thank you, Kevin Prufer.

NINA DODD
Lexington, Massachusetts

SEX AND SACRILEGE

EVEN IF EVERY ONE OF JAMES Wood's complaints against John Updike's *Terrorist* were compelling, this passage in his condescending review would deserve a plaque in the Critics' Hall of Shame: "[T]here are few things in American culture that better prove the accuracy of at least this part of the Islamist critique of the hedonistic West than the sex-obsessed

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THE NEW REPUBLIC (ISSN 0028-6583), Vol. 235, Numbers 7 & 8, Issues 4,778 & 4,779, August 14 & 21, 2006. (Printed in the United States on August 3, 2006.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated March 20 & 27, June 5 & 12, July 10 & 17, August 14 & 21, September 11 & 18, and November 27 & December 4, 2006) at 1331 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. Telephone (202) 508-4444. For advertising inquiries, please contact Grant Loomis at (202) 508-4444 or our NY sales office at (212) 466-8447. Yearly subscriptions, $79.97; foreign, $119.97 (U.S. funds); Canada, $99.97 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $6.00 domestic and $10.00 foreign/Canada (includes postage & handling). © 2006 by The New Republic, LLC. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C. and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 628-9383. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. For hard copy reprints, call (202) 508-4444. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, and CD-ROM are available through ProQuest, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone (800) 521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope (e-mail address: letters@tnr.com). For subscription inquiries or problems call (800) 827-1289 or visit our website at www.thenewrepublic.com.

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novels of John Updike." The novels would "prove" such a thing only to a reader brainwashed against the flesh and oblivious to the verbally exact and supremely attentive way in which Updike has written about our sexual experience. The respect Updike accords human sexual behavior has nothing in common with hedonism. He carries on and extends the great modernist project of Joyce and Lawrence—that of writing honestly and clearly about our carnal lives. The literate, civic, tolerant society that gave rise to the novels of John Updike is also dishonored by Wood's foolish words.

DAVID THORBURN
Professor of Literature
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

WOOD DOESN'T EVEN MENTION *Terrorist*'s biggest problem. The plot also happens to be an Islamic rewrite of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man*, even if Updike didn't intend it that way. Joyce's classic is the most quietly savage and thorough indictment Christianity ever got, so if Updike was trying to write sympathetically about Islam, he certainly picked the wrong model. He deserves thanks, though, for showing us what knots an Islamophile can tie himself up in.

DANIEL G. SCHAEFFER
St. Louis, Missouri

JAMES WOOD RESPONDS:
Of course John Updike has written exactly and sensitively about sex. But David Thorburn conveniently ignores Updike's wearisome misogyny and sexual coarseness—in particular his obsession with fellatio (the hero of *Toward the End of Time* shoots "bullets of milk" into a woman's face). I find it disfiguring but sadly consistent with this fine writer (once deeply admired by me), who has puzzlingly wasted the last decade with repetitious slackness.

SNIDER MAN

AMONG THE MANY ERRORS AND misrepresentations in Martha Nussbaum's review of my book on manliness is the statement that I have retired from a chair at Harvard ("Man Overboard," June 26). Not so. Apart from that, I say that I did not follow her instruction for writing my book because I did not want a product quite as earnest as the books she has done lately. Nor do I desire the servile future of caring males listening raptly to righteous females that she has in mind for us.

HARVEY MANSFIELD
Professor of Government
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

SOLE SUPPORT

JONATHAN CHAIT'S STORY ON HOW the right has turned on Bush includes criticism of this *Washington Post* line: "Disaffection over spending and immigration have caused conservatives to take flight from President Bush" ("Binge and Purge," June 19). Chait points out that conservatives are the only remaining support for Bush. Both are correct. This spring's drop in Bush's poll numbers was greatest among Republicans, because the Democrats rejected him much earlier, and the independents' poll numbers dropped over 2005. Republicans and conservatives are the only ones left.

FRANK PALMER
Chicago, Illinois

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Mo Joe

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

Listen to Joe Lieberman's liberal critics and you hear the same lines again and again. He has "betrayed his party" and practiced "turncoat politics." He has "defined his image by distancing himself from other Democrats." He's not a "team player."

Funny, that's just what originally drew me to the guy. In early 1991, Lieberman had recently become a senator, and I had recently become one of his constituents. A Republican president named Bush was proposing war against Saddam Hussein, and right-thinking liberals were appalled. At Yale, where I was a sophomore, professors held teach-ins to explain just how immoral and disastrous the impending Gulf war would be. Antiwar protesters picketed Lieberman's New Haven home five separate times. His constituent mail ran overwhelmingly against the use of force.

When it came time to vote, Senate Democrats largely stood together against the war. Only one blue-state Democrat betrayed his party: Joe Lieberman.

And his partisan apostasies didn't end there. From almost the moment Bill Clinton took office, Lieberman challenged him on Bosnia, becoming what *The Hartford Courant* in May 1993 called "a lone voice" supporting air strikes against Slobodan Miloševic. By the summer of 1995, Lieberman was co-sponsoring a bill to repeal the Bosnian arms embargo with Bob Dole, Clinton's likely Republican opponent. White House spokesman Mike McCurry called the bill "nutty." And, in the Senate, it enjoyed far more Republican than Democratic support. But it helped pressure Clinton to lift the embargo and launch the air strikes that saved Bosnia from destruction.

Four years later, Lieberman played turncoat again, joining with John McCain to urge the Clinton administration to consider ground troops in Kosovo. Once again, the Clintonites cursed Lieberman and then adopted his view. And the threat of ground troops helped convince Miloševic to fold.

On domestic policy, Lieberman was equally disloyal. In 1991, he slammed his party for telling Americans that "we are going to take your money you worked so damn hard to earn, and we are going to give it to a lot of people who don't work." *The New York Times* said he sounded like Ronald Reagan. But soon, Bill Clinton was sounding like him. When he ran for president the following year, Clinton took up Lieberman's theme, calling for an end to "welfare as we know it" and stressing that government would help people who "worked hard and played by the rules." To some liberals, this verged on racism. But Clinton's vision of a "new covenant" between individuals and government, in which the latter provided opportunity but demanded responsibility, told Reagan Democrats that liberals knew the difference between good behavior and bad.

When it came to Hollywood, Lieberman made a similar point, calling for a "revolt of the revolted" against violence and smut in the media. Many liberals called him a self-righteous prude—particularly when he joined forces with right-wing moralist William Bennett. But Lieberman understood that many parents saw Hollywood as undermining the values that they badly wanted their children to learn. And they blamed this cultural subversion on liberal elites incapable of distinguishing good values from bad.

Clinton, yet again, picked up Lieberman's theme. Through symbolic measures like the v-Chip and school uniforms, he disassociated liberalism from moral and cultural license. And, when his own behavior disastrously undermined that message, Lieberman was the first Senate Democrat to denounce it. Unlike his liberal critics, Lieberman recognized the threat that Clinton's actions posed to the Democrats standing with culturally conservative, blue-collar voters. Indeed, as party strategists William Galston and Elaine Kamarck have argued, while Clinton overcame the racial gulf separating Democrats from the white working class, he exacerbated a new gulf, centered on religion and culture. And, in trying to bridge it today, prospective presidential candidates like Hillary Clinton are talking about morality and denouncing misogynistic video games—following the path that Lieberman blazed more than a decade ago.

To be sure, Lieberman's record in the '90s was not flawless. Some of his aisle-crossing—his support for capital gains tax cuts, for instance, and opposition to the expensing of stock options—was indefensible. But, on balance, his Clinton-era heresies—many of which became the heresies of Clintonism itself—left liberalism in a far stronger position at the end of Clinton's presidency than it had been at the beginning.

Does this matter? In a way, that's the question at the heart of Lieberman's reelection struggle. In the '90s, Lieberman proved a crucial check against his party's worst instincts. In the Bush era, by contrast, he has proved a poor check against the GOP's. While, in the Clinton era, he was often prophetic in recognizing the threat to liberal values posed by enemies overseas, in the Bush era he has been slow in recognizing the threat to liberal values posed by adversaries at home.

For Lieberman's activist opponents, his failure to challenge Republicans aggressively—especially on Iraq and torture—is all that matters. The idea that he might deserve reelection because in the past he usefully challenged *Democrats* seems downright perverse at a time when Democrats have no power. The best argument against Lieberman is that, by acting the same way in the radically conservative Bush era as he did in the moderately liberal Clinton one, his liberal iconoclasm has morphed from a strength into a weakness. The best argument for him is that, with Bush's power on the wane, and Democrats resurgent, that iconoclasm may soon become necessary again—to keep liberals from learning so much from Iraq that they forget Bosnia and from becoming so defined by their opposition to Bush's politics that they forget Clinton's.

Some of this comes down to historical perspective. Liberals who encountered Hubert Humphrey in 1948, when he defended civil rights at the Democratic convention, generally admired him in a way that liberals who encountered him in 1968, when he defended the Vietnam war, never did. So it is with Joe Lieberman today. I understand why liberal activists cannot forgive him for being defiantly wrong on Iraq. But I will always remember him as the man whose house was picketed by liberal activists during another Iraq war, and who stood defiant and isolated and right. **PETER BEINART**

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Lost City

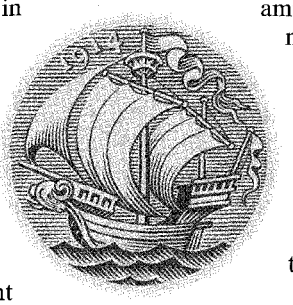
THERE ARE NO drifting corpses this time, no families clinging to sun-baked roofs or huddling in the lightless squalor of the Superdome. But the year following Hurricane Katrina has been its own catastrophe—quieter, but in many ways more appalling than the storm's passage. If Katrina suggested a rot in American society—a decrepit federal government, a blunted sense of social solidarity, the entrenchment of poverty—the aftermath has confirmed it.

We can no longer plead ignorance about broken, vulnerable New Orleans, yet we've done a shameful job of rescuing it.

No matter how large the reconstruction spending sounds when described by the administration or Congress, it will not nearly suffice to care for Katrina's victims or rebuild their city. While facets of life have resumed their old patterns in many neighborhoods, important components of the city infrastructure resemble, well, Baghdad. Chunks of New Orleans can count on daily power outages. The municipal water system hemorrhages 85 million gallons of water per day. Medical care has dwindled—with hundreds of doctors and nurses fleeing the city and less than half its hospitals receiving patients.

Indeed, it is already difficult to recall the outburst of idealism Katrina triggered just one year ago. Liberals announced that the storm had brought them closer to the spirit of FDR and infused them with a new pride. George W. Bush choreographed a turn in Jackson Square, where he portrayed himself as a latter-day Michael Harrington. And Congress promised that it would bleed the Treasury to save the city. Rebuilding New Orleans, politicians proclaimed, would provide an old-fashioned sense of national purpose.

While some money has flowed to the shores of the lower Mississippi, this sense of national purpose has been completely absent. Reconstruction has proceeded aimlessly and without leadership. Mayor Ray Nagin hasn't even issued his grand plan for the city yet. (That is scheduled for the end of this year.) The municipal authorities who could make the city livable are starved for funds. Despite needing $2 billion in repairs following the storm, the city's water and sewage system has received a mere $32 million loan from Washington. Meanwhile, the feds have completely stiffed the city's bankrupt power company—which may pass $700 million in losses and rebuilding costs on to consumers, essentially requiring them to pay $100 *more* in utility costs each month for the privilege of living in a semi-habitable city.



Nobody would have expected New Orleans to be put back together in a flash. But Congress and local officials have dithered, and their glacial pace will exact a permanent cost. Displaced homeowners are only now becoming eligible for federal money to help them rebuild—months after many made the decision not to return. A relief bill passed by the GOP House in March managed to omit critical funds for battered levees. At times, negotiations stalled because some Republicans tried to divert Katrina relief *away* from Louisiana.

Indeed, Katrina's aftermath has not proved that congressional Republicans are devoid of empathy, but rather that they reserve it for states run by former party chairmen. As of late spring, Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour had wheedled his old friends in Washington into giving his constituents roughly the same sized block grant as received by Louisiana—even though Louisiana suffered more than three times the number of seriously damaged homes and lost one more major city than its easterly neighbor. The Democrats, meanwhile, have been disappointingly silent, preferring to focus on GOP incompetence abroad rather than at home.

Little wonder that what was billed as a revived war on poverty has barely amounted to a skirmish. There have been no new anti-poverty initiatives, let alone a beefing up of the old ones. As a result, the number of Americans living below the poverty line increased last year, as it has for every year of the Bush presidency.

One could posit historical and cultural explanations for our inaction. The flip side of American dynamism, after all, is its tendency toward amnesia—a cheerful urge to move beyond pain and wait for the Oliver Stone movie to provide an eventual catharsis. Every time an event is imagined to "change everything," American life bull-headedly continues along its old path.

Except, that is, when it can't, as in the case of the hundreds of thousands of residents displaced by Katrina who have yet to be—who may never be—made whole. Their government has now failed them twice. The first time—for all the errors and misjudgments made by FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers—the catastrophe was difficult to predict. This time, by contrast, it was all too easy. ■

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White House Watch

Analyze Diss

BY RYAN LIZZA

IT'S NOT TOO much to say that Representative Mark Kennedy owes his political career to George W. Bush. When the Minneapolis corporate executive left the boardroom to embark on a quixotic bid for Congress in 2000, Bush's coattails carried him to a 155-vote victory. Once ensconced in Washington, Kennedy thrived as a Bush conservative in the salad days of post–September 11 GOP dominance. His fealty to the president was repaid in 2002 with the ultimate campaign gift: footage of Kennedy and Bush walking solemnly down the White House colonnade as the young congressman imparted some inaudible wisdom to the commander-in-chief. A Kennedy campaign ad that fall featured the scene with the voiceover, "I'm Congressman Mark Kennedy. I've stood with President Bush on the war against terrorism." It worked. Initially considered vulnerable, Kennedy won the race with a knockout 57 to 35 percent. In 2004, Bush's coattails helped lift Kennedy to victory once more. Bush won the district with 57 percent of the vote, his best showing in the state, while Kennedy lagged behind with 54 percent.

But those coattails have gotten an awful lot shorter in the last two years. Today, Kennedy is running like a candidate trying to shake off a disreputable past—in this case, one as a Bush Republican. And he's not alone. The districts and states that represent the best pick-up opportunities for Democrats, almost by definition, are the ones where Bush fatigue is strongest. So, after three elections of embracing Bush, GOP candidates across the country are facing a new challenge: perfecting the art of dissing Bush.

Flip on the tube in Minnesota these days and you'll meet the new Mark Kennedy, now running for the U.S. Senate. His latest campaign commercial features not Bush but Kennedy's mom. And Kennedy's dad. And Kennedy's three brothers. And Kennedy's wife. And Kennedy's four children. And Kennedy's dead ancestors (pictures of them, anyway). Rather than reminding voters of his experience serving in the House during six of the most consequential years in American history, Kennedy explains to Minnesotans that he's a certified public accountant.

Banished are any mentions of the president, the war on terrorism, or the GOP. Instead, the ad features a shot of Kennedy dressed ridiculously in a birthday hat and party blower to emphasize his daughter's on-camera testimony that he's "just not much of a party guy" and "doesn't do whatever the party says to." (She's right, though only barely: Kennedy opposed Bush's position only 8 percent of the time since coming to Washington.) When a reporter recently asked Kennedy why the scrupulously nonpartisan *Congressional Quarterly* described him as a "loyal Bush supporter," Kennedy seemed to regard the phrase as a political smear: "The attack on me is that I'm a lap dog of the president. ... To have an organization as reputable as *CQ* fall into that trap, I just don't know."

Missouri Senator Jim Talent is also unveiling a newfound independent streak. Running in a special election in 2002, Talent had done Kennedy one better, scoring not only footage from the president but audio, too. "The best person running for the United States Senate is Jim Talent," Bush announced in a campaign ad. "The man doesn't need a focus group or a poll to tell him what to say." Perhaps. Though it seems that the GOP's cratering polls may have something to do with the new tack Talent is trying out for his reelection race. Bush is out, as is partisanship in all its forms. "Most people don't care if you're red or blue, Republican or Democrat," declares a new Talent ad, wishfully. In a "director's commentary" about the spot (I kid you not) that the senator provides on his website, he brags of passing legislation with Democrats including Chris Dodd, Charles Schumer, and Dianne Feinstein. No mention of the guy who signed it all into law.

DISSING BUSH CAN be trickier than it might seem at first. There is, after all, the little matter of fundraising, where the president, despite his sagging popularity, is still the party heavyweight. The trick for vulnerable GOP candidates is to somehow get Bush money without being in any way associated with Bush or the other radioactive members of his administration—a predicament that is tying Republicans into pretzels from coast to coast. The most common maneuver is for candidates to invent excuses to arrive late at their own fundraisers—or not at all. In March, New Jersey Senate candidate Tom Kean conveniently showed up at a buck-raking event in Newark just moments after the vice president had departed. His explanation? He was stuck in traffic. Virginia House member Thelma Drake was more creative. In May, when Bush dropped into Virginia Beach to raise $500,000 for her campaign, she didn't bother to show up at all. How could she, after all, when her vote was needed in Washington on a critical piece of legislation? (The bill in question passed 395–0.) Washington Senate candidate Mike McGavick at least had the decency to come up with an unimpeachable scheduling conflict when Bush showed up in the Seattle suburbs for a GOP fund-raiser: He was attending his son's high school graduation in Pennsylvania.

But no good trick lasts forever. Skipping out on fundraisers when Bush is in town became a common enough practice that Democrats started pointing out the ploy in local media outlets, making it more trouble than it was worth. The solution some candidates have landed on is to endure the shame of sharing a stage with the president of the United States and, after he leaves, to criticize him subtly but pointedly. House candidates Rick O'Donnell of Colorado and Heather Wilson of New Mexico have taken this course, smiling alongside Bush as he collects campaign checks for them

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one day and running ads trumpeting their willingness to defy Republican leaders in Washington the next.

For some, the best approach may be simply to ask Bush to stay away. When the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee recently unearthed the fact that Bush would be raising dough for David Reichert, who represents an increasingly Democratic district in Washington state, the news generated a wave of negative coverage about his coziness with the White House. When Reichert joined the pariah-in-chief at the event anyway, it seemed to do him more harm than good: The visit pumped anti-Bush money into the coffers of his opponent, who ended up out-raising him for the quarter. Indeed, the event provided so much fodder to tie Reichert to Bush that it's widely seen as the reason Reichert reversed his position on stem-cell research last month.

GIVEN THAT 55 to 60 percent of Americans believe the president is doing a bad job, Bush-bashing is a surprisingly flexible tool, able to woo constituencies from across the ideological spectrum. While Mark Kennedy disses the president in order to win over fussy Minnesota independents, other Republicans badmouth Bush to woo conservatives angry about his immigration plan. Pennsylvania Representative Jim Gerlach tried this approach in a recent ad, explaining, "The president wants a guest-worker program that may lead to amnesty for illegal immigrants. That's sending the wrong message at the wrong time." Arizona's J.D. Hayworth has embraced this line in his latest book, complaining that Bush is "disturbingly vague and indecisive" on immigration.

In New England, by contrast, Bush-bashing is all about courting liberal voters. From the endangered Republicans in Connecticut to the GOP candidate for an open seat in Vermont, publicly breaking with the president is not so much a stunt as a way of life. Connecticut Representative Chris Shays has accused the Bush administration of hiding the costs of the war in Iraq and blasted the president for his stem-cell veto—and that's just in the last few weeks. Meanwhile, up in Vermont, part of what *The Washington Post* recently dubbed the "impeachment belt"—because of the region's enthusiasm for kicking Bush out of office—House candidate Martha Rainville told a reporter that the president's "time is better spent on other things" than visiting the state.

That may not be a terribly surprising statement coming from a Republican running for the seat vacated by socialist Bernie Sanders. What is surprising about this year's orgy of GOP Bush-bashing is how manufactured and artificial it all is. On the surface, the revolt against the president suggests that the storied discipline of his political machine has broken down. In fact, it means nothing of the kind: By instructing candidates to "localize" their races as much as possible, the party committees have essentially green-lighted the presidential diss as a campaign strategy. Which raises an interesting possibility: After six years of futile attempts by Democrats, could it be that Republicans are the ones who have finally figured out how to win elections by bashing Bush? ■

Romancing Iran.
Blind Date

BY EFRAIM HALEVY

AS FIGHTING BETWEEN Israel and Hezbollah entered its third week, a senior Iranian representative named Ali Larijani arrived in Damascus, where he apparently talked with Syrian President Bashar Assad and Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. A Kuwaiti newspaper reported that the aim of the meeting was to figure out how to keep supplying Hezbollah with Iranian arms. But my guess is that Larijani also carried a sobering message from his superiors in Tehran: The longer this fight drags on, the greater the risk to Iranian interests in the Middle East.

Iran's president has publicly called for a cease-fire, and with good reason. Before Hezbollah attacked Israel, this summer was shaping up to be a promising geopolitical moment for Iran. In late May, Condoleezza Rice announced an about-face on U.S. policy toward the pariah state. With Washington signaling that it was ready to engage, Iran seemed on a path to eventually negotiating an understanding with the West, perhaps exchanging its nuclear program for some level of international acceptance. The deal would almost certainly have delivered what Iran has long coveted: widely acknowledged status as a regional power. But, whereas Iran was operating from a position of strength just one month ago, it now looks weaker by the day. It does not much matter whether Tehran seriously miscalculated by ordering Hezbollah to instigate this war or whether Hezbollah acted unwisely on its own. Either way, the terrorist organization that serves as an extension of Iranian power in the western Middle East is now in danger of emerging badly damaged from this conflict, and that is troublesome news for Tehran. Fortunately, Iran's sudden weakness is Israel's newfound opportunity. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's government should seize this moment to do what would have been unthinkable just weeks ago: negotiate with Iran face to face.

TO UNDERSTAND WHY Iran might be willing to do this now, you have to understand just how worried it is about losing Hezbollah—or seeing the group's power severely curtailed. For more than 20 years, Hezbollah has produced rich dividends for Iran in

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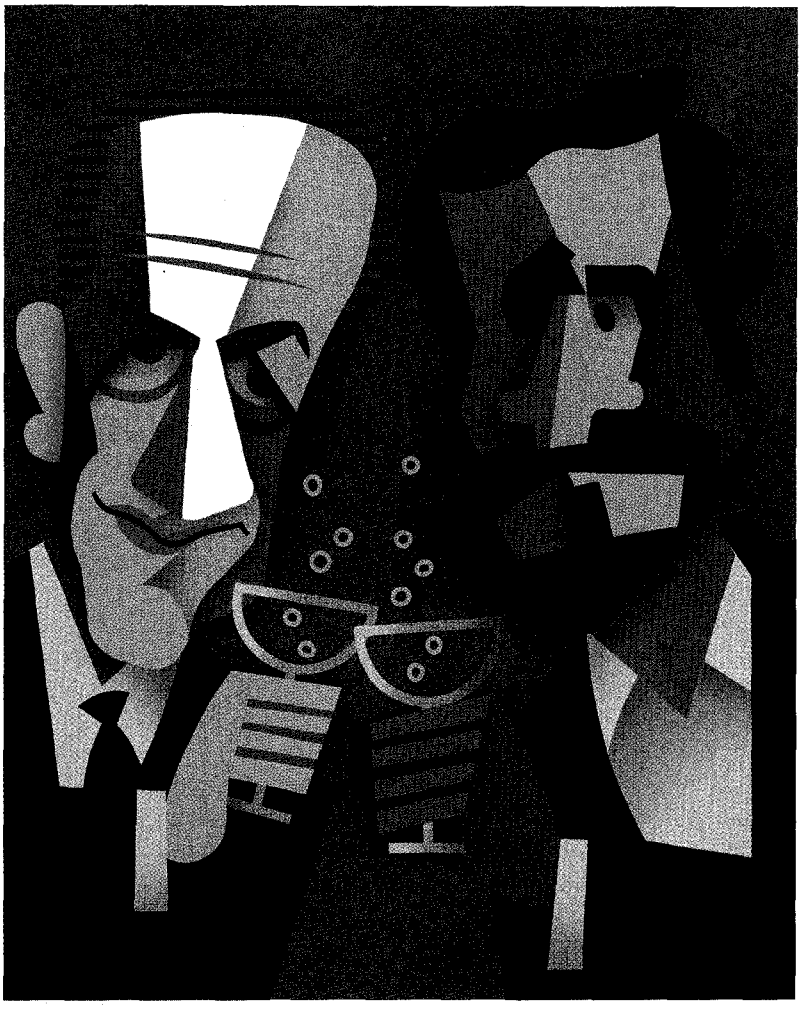

return for a relatively modest investment. In its infancy, it more or less singlehandedly chased the United States out of Lebanon by bombing the U.S. Embassy and carrying out an attack that killed 241 American troops. During the 1980s, Hezbollah kidnapped a number of Western citizens and held them for ransom. The negotiations to win their release were torturous, and, at one stage, senior American officials offered to sell arms to Iran as part of the deal. The result was the Iran-Contra scandal. Later, with the help of Iranian intelligence, Hezbollah blew up the Israeli embassy and the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires. All these activities—and the publicity that accompanied them—enhanced Hezbollah's prestige, both inside and outside Lebanon.

But it was on Lebanon's border with Israel where Hezbollah would truly earn its credentials in the Arab world. Starting in the early '90s, Iran and Syria decided to transform the organization into a highly effective guerrilla force. The group harassed Israeli troops policing the southern Lebanon security zone, and it was able to claim credit for then–Prime Minister Ehud Barak's withdrawal in 2000. Arabs throughout the Middle East greeted this development as the first time an Arab force had used violence to induce a major Israeli pullback from occupied territory. Building on this success, Syria and Iran would go on to arm Hezbollah with more than 10,000 rockets and missiles capable of targeting large areas of northern Israel. And, even as it was transforming into one of the region's most powerful military forces, Hezbollah was also strengthening its political arm by participating in elections: Two ministers in Lebanon's current government are Hezbollah representatives.

In sum, Hezbollah is no small achievement for Iran: a highly accomplished Shia guerrilla force flourishing on Lebanese soil, in the heart of the Arab-Sunni Muslim world. It is led by a brilliant political and spiritual leader who defers to Ayatollah Khaminei in Tehran and augmented by an independent Iranian military presence in Lebanon. All of this is cloaked in the legitimacy provided by Hezbollah's democratic participation in Lebanese politics and popularity with segments of the Lebanese people. What more could the mullahs hope for? Actually, things might only have gotten better. The Shia community, which makes up about 40 percent of Lebanon's population, could ultimately have gained control of the country, enabling Iran to establish a forward operational base on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean and improve its access to Muslim communities in the Balkans and the sizeable Shia community in Turkey. Until last month, Iran's prospects in Lebanon looked favorable indeed.

Now all could be lost overnight. True, as many commentators have pointed out, Hezbollah might emerge strengthened from this conflict. An effective draw in the present hostilities would be perceived in the Middle East as a spectacular success for Hezbollah, and it would contribute greatly to Iranian prestige. The dangers of such an outcome cannot be overstated: Growing self-confidence in Tehran could further encourage Iranian interference in Iraq or even entice the mullahs to reach out to the Shia minority in Saudi Arabia. Most disturbingly, it could jeopardize any chance that the West might convince Iran to suspend its nuclear program.

Yet there is good reason to believe that Iran will be weakened by this war. Hezbollah has so far sustained losses far greater than those to which it admits. Its basic infrastructure has been mauled, and it has almost certainly concealed the deaths of senior commanders in the field. Meanwhile, the group has been forced to accept a plan put forward by Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora intended to lead to its eventual disarmament. Its missile launches—designed to provoke fear in northern Israel—have not weakened the resolve of the Israeli public to see the war through. Nasrallah has acknowledged that morale within his group is suffering. His decision to fire missiles with escalating payloads and greater range deeper and deeper into Israel could be

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seen as an act of hubris on his part, but I suspect it is instead an act of desperation. Hezbollah's long-range missiles are its weapons of last resort. Once they are launched, and once Israel has withstood them and continued to fight, Nasrallah will have no other cards left to play.

ALL OF WHICH explains why Iran, desperate to avoid losing Hezbollah as an effective surrogate, might be willing to sit down with Israel and negotiate. But why should Israel negotiate with Iran? It is true that Israel must be seen to unequivocally defeat Hezbollah on the ground. But such a defeat cannot be made to stick without the true adversary in this conflict accepting the outcome; Hezbollah, after all, is a mere proxy, and its most important decisions are made by others to the east. For one thing, there is the matter of the two kidnapped Israeli soldiers: Israel cannot stop fighting until it has won their freedom, and, if previous experience with Hezbollah and kidnapping is any guide, their release will have to be authorized by Iran. Moreover, any cease-fire that does not include Syria and Iran will not last long. The government of Lebanon can assure Israel that Hezbollah will not be resupplied with weaponry, but such an agreement cannot really be guaranteed without Syrian and Iranian compliance. Thus, negotiation with Syria and—especially—Iran is the only way to achieve the results that Israel needs from this war.

To be sure, there are serious barriers to such negotiations. Iran does not recognize Israel's right to exist, and its president has said that the Jewish state must be erased from the map. But, if Iran and Syria do not cooperate, then the conflict will either continue or be briefly postponed to a later date. Tehran and Damascus cannot accept either option. And, for Israel, anything less than clear success on the battlefield accompanied by political negotiations with Iran and Syria will be an exercise in self-delusion. Which is why, in the days to come, Israel would be wise to sit down at the negotiating table and talk to its most bitter enemies. And it would be in the interest of the United States to join them.

What would such negotiations look like? The agenda would begin with a focus on peace in southern Lebanon—Iran and Syria would have to agree to restrain Hezbollah, while Israel would promise to cease its attacks—but negotiations need not end there. The elephant in the room is Tehran's nuclear program, and, while that issue would not be resolved immediately, beginning the dialogue is, for now, more important than obtaining quick results.

Such talks may sound like an impossibility given the current climate; indeed, it is entirely possible that an outstretched hand from Israel and the United States would be slapped away by Tehran. But, if that happens, then Iran risks embarking along a path that could lead to national disaster. Tehran knows this, so there is a chance it will seize any opportunity to salvage an honorable exit from the situation. Thanks to events in Lebanon, the odds of Iran sitting down at the bargaining table and making major concessions are better now than they have been in a long time. ■

New Orleans Postcard

Trading Spaces

BY JED HORNE

MY WIFE AND I were about to put our house on the market before Hurricane Katrina. I remind myself of this as we contemplate an act that has taken on the trappings of civic treachery—putting our house on the market now, a year after Katrina. It's true: We really were talking to realtors last summer. It was time to downsize, we said. Empty-nest syndrome, we said. That was our cover. Secretly, we were a bit freaked out about hurricanes even before Katrina. (At least I was.) Not so secretly, we were certain the national real estate bubble had reached its soapy and iridescent limit. Our house was paid for, but we were starting to feel like New Yorkers: It was worth more than we were.

Now it's different. Everyone is freaked out about hurricanes. Staying on in New Orleans has become a matter of courage, a political statement. The mayor tells us that New Orleans is on the verge of the biggest boom in the long history of a boom-and-bust town. Upward of $8 billion in federal block grants for housing is about to wash over Louisiana, an economic tidal surge as epic in scale as the watery one that blew apart the levees and drowned the city. Housing prices are up 26 percent since Katrina. (That's in the unflooded parts of town, of course.) We're coming back gangbusters, I tell myself, even as I secretly wonder whether our local housing bubble isn't a last hurrah, a sucker's rally. Hang tough, I tell my friends.

But an awful lot of doctors and lawyers and schoolteachers and stockbrokers and nurses and folks with kids to educate are not hanging tough. The newspaper ran a statistic the other day: Eighty-nine percent of the city's psychiatrists have bailed out. And New Orleans never needed counseling more urgently. Another big storm—Al Gore tells us it's coming—and there could be a stampede for the exits. That storm could come next week, and it could be bigger than Katrina. The parts of the levee system that failed last time have been patched together. But what about the parts that didn't fail, the parts that were about to fail, that would have failed if the parts that did fail hadn't failed first?

OUR HOUSE IS in the French Quarter, so it didn't flood. They knew where to build a house in 1816: close to the river, on the natural ridge thrown up by eons of sedimentation. More precisely, the free man of color who built our house (a commander during the Battle of New Orleans) knew how to

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build in a part of the world prone to rough weather: parapet walls to hold the roof in place, massive attic timbers from the barges that used to be torn apart when they reached the end of the line, back in the years before steam made it possible to haul barges upriver and reuse them. Masonry over brick—no clapboard for Category Three winds to tease apart and rip away.

I was on vacation in Mexico when Katrina rose up in the Gulf. Sensible people were fleeing southeast Louisiana; I scrambled to get back. As the federal levees failed and New Orleans became Atlantis, the early reports held that the French Quarter was also underwater. My colleagues from the newspaper gave me the bad news as they stumbled out of the circulation trucks that had brought them—some weeping, some merely exhausted—from New Orleans to an evacuation point in Baton Rouge where I reconnected with them. You can imagine the sense of relief—of love for our house—that swept over me a day or two later, when I slipped past National Guard checkpoints and saw it for the first time post-Katrina. A few slates had been knocked off the roof. Crape myrtle branches littered the back courtyard. A windowpane had been blown out on one of the French doors—one pane in a wall of French doors. After days without electricity, an unimaginably vile stench emanated from a bag of scallops in the refrigerator. But there it stood, loyal and true—a squat, doughty little house that had survived Katrina as it had every other hurricane for 200 years.

One of my sons has a flare for the dramatic: "Sell the house? You'd be opening the trap door on a gallows," he said to me, and he said it with a straight face. His big brother is more practical. His grad school signed off on a one-semester research project on city planning—or the lack of it—in the "new" New Orleans. He's staying with us in his old room, in what locals indelicately call the slave quarters, out back of the main cottage. He said he expects he'll be here through the end of the year, so it would be nice if we didn't dump the house before then. "After that, Dad, do what you need to do." But what would that be? Squeeze into an overpriced condo? Move to Iowa and start over?

COASTAL EROSION. Rising seas. A delicately man-made landscape that requires careful and constant maintenance by an incompetent federal establishment. A feckless and self-infatuated mayor. A Congress and White House that lack the resolve to demand a state-of-the-art flood defense around the city commanding the mouth of the continent's mightiest river. Why is rebuilding New Orleans not a matter of national pride, rather than grudging debate? Whatever happened to the can-do spirit America once laid claim to? Must we ask the Dutch to do it for us?

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But, by the same token, what sane person would invest a dime in New Orleans just now? Why wouldn't anyone slide his chips off the table and ease quietly toward the door?

Carl, my barber, tells me that tailback Reggie Bush, the darling of Saints fans now scattered across the nation, just paid nearly $2 million for a riverfront condo tower a stone's throw from the Convention Center, where 20,000 flood refugees were trapped for the better part of a week. Donald Trump is clamoring for permits to build a glitzy Trump condo hotel in what would be the tallest skyscraper in the city. The Hyatt chain has committed $300 million to a makeover of its storm-ravaged hotel next door to the freshly re-roofed Superdome. It's part of a grand plan that also includes moving City Hall, building a new civil courthouse, a jazz museum, and a downtown park.

The French Quarter hums again with music at night. Only a new generation of tourist T-shirt slogans—THE BITCH LEFT ME WITH ONLY THE SHIRT ON MY BACK—betrays Katrina's passage. In the pillared precincts farther upriver, the Garden District dreams its leafy dream as though nothing had ever happened, not even the Civil War.

Then there's the rest of the city, the disaster zone, an area five times the size of Manhattan. You want to know what's weird about New Orleans? It's not the houses near the canals that were hit with a Niagara of water so powerful it blew them off their foundations and tossed cars into trees. What happened there is dynamic and self-evident. What's weird about New Orleans is the mile upon mile of trim and upright ranch houses that marinated in swill for three or four weeks. Vast swaths of a city emptied as if by a neutron bomb, with only the fecal brown floodline up under the eaves to suggest what went so very wrong—that, and the ghostly dried brine still coating the dead lawns and landscaping.

AND YET PEOPLE are coming back, gutting homes in this ghost town. Some of them think they're just getting wrecked houses ready for sale to the bottom-feeders or to the state through the buyout program Washington's belated billions are meant to finance. (A lump sum, argued over for ten months, that amounts to a fraction of what gets spent every month in Iraq.) Some will cash out. Others will settle back into these properties, because they can't find a buyer or can't break a son's heart.

Real estate, the experts note, has a helpful inertial effect in a post-catastrophe environment. It brings people back to their holdings. It contributes to what Lawrence Vale at MIT calls the resilience of cities. New Orleans is proving notably resilient—more so, in any case, than the federal levees.

A part of me wishes the housing market would crash and get it over with, erase the run-up that makes me feel like I have too much at stake in New Orleans to stay on in New Orleans. In the end, I doubt we'll leave. Our lives are in New Orleans, a city that has never been for the faint of heart. We have too much at stake here. So does America. ■

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A Ninth Ward family's way out.

The Golden Ticket

BY JONATHAN COHN

KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN

THE FAIRY TALE began to unravel in the most unlikely of locations: The electronics aisle at Target. It was late September, the day after the Anderson family, as they had come to be known, first made their journey from a shelter in Houma, Louisiana, to a home in Kalamazoo, Michigan. The family, all of them refugees from Hurricane Katrina, had relocated to the Midwest at the invitation of a Catholic church group based in Kalamazoo. And, while they were hardly the only people making such a transition in the weeks after the hurricane battered New Orleans, the story of the Anderson family seems to be unique.

The Kalamazoo church group hadn't simply arranged to find the family housing. They had also remodeled the house and promised to provide transportation, job opportunities, and even private school tuition for the young children. Before the storm, the Anderson family lived in New Orleans's Ninth Ward, one of the city's poorest neighborhoods. The family wasn't destitute; the adults were all high school graduates. But they were working in service jobs like hotel housekeeping and nursing-home care—in other words, part of what most experts would call the working poor. Now, just weeks after losing most of their possessions to floodwaters and narrowly escaping from Katrina's aftermath, it was almost as if they had won the lottery.

Of course, the volunteers in Kalamazoo couldn't anticipate all of the family's needs. The church group, which was white, was particularly sensitive to the possibility that the family, which was black, might have different tastes in clothing and personal-care items. So the group had collected a series of Target gift cards, said to be worth several hundred dollars, from individual and corporate sponsors around Kalamazoo. And, since the family didn't yet have a car, Ann Berglund, one of the women who had worked hardest on the relocation project, decided to drive them over to Target on that September day herself.

Three members of the family came along on that initial trip, including Randall Anderson, the charismatic 33-year-old father and husband, who had become the de facto head of the household. Although it was a tight squeeze into Ann's Jeep, nobody complained. And, when the group arrived at Target, spirits were still high. But then Ann saw Randall picking out what looked like a large music player, and she became concerned. She felt she had an obligation to the people who had donated the cards to make sure the money was really being spent to help the Anderson family meet its most basic needs. As she explained later, "I just didn't think the first item should be a gigantic boom box."

After Ann suggested that the music player wouldn't fit in

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her car, Randall ended up getting a smaller, less expensive model, while the rest of the family stocked up on essentials like shampoo. Nothing more was said right then, but, for Randall, this was the first of several incidents in which he detected disapproval over spending priorities from Ann or the other woman heading up the relocation project, Lynn McLeod. And he resented it. Randall's family unit now included five adults and four children, all living under one roof for the first time. What was so unreasonable about their purchasing an extra DVD player or a few more televisions, particularly since they had those things back when they lived in New Orleans? "They treated us like children," Randall said later. "Like we never had our own home before, we didn't know what to buy."

Randall's feelings only intensified over the next few weeks, particularly once Ann and Lynn made it clear that they'd be holding on to the gift cards—in effect, supervising how the family spent the money. For the next few months, the tension built over a series of new disputes—about everything from missed doctor's appointments to questions about the use of federal relief money. Things went downhill from there, and, today, virtually nobody connected to the experience has anything good to say about it. Probably the only thing on which both the church group and the family members agree is that the project was a failure.

If true, that would be a depressing coda to a story that began nearly a year ago, when images of desperate people waving white flags from highway overpasses and lying sweltering and sick in the Superdome reawakened the conscience of the middle class. Hurricane Katrina introduced America to the Ninth Ward and to the mostly poor, mostly black people who had lived and died there. It also rekindled the national interest in improving lives like theirs, especially in light of the government's recent failure to protect them. For the first time since the welfare reform discussions of the 1990s, poverty was back on the political agenda—along with the debate over how to combat it.

Public attention moved on quickly. But, in the meantime, as the refugees have streamed out across the country and, occasionally, into marginally better economic and cultural situations, some test cases have emerged. The Anderson family may represent the most interesting of these—a unique opportunity to see whether a black family from one of the nation's most notorious ghettos would start acting like part of the white bourgeoisie if it suddenly inherited a house, money, and opportunities to advance economically. The answer seems to be no, at least as far as the Kalamazoo sponsors are concerned. But whether that says more about the family that was supposedly being rescued or the people who thought they were doing the rescuing—well, that's a little more complicated to sort out.

IT'S MORE COMPLICATED, first and foremost, because the Anderson family didn't necessarily need rescuing, at least in the classic anti-poverty sense. The Ninth Ward may have been one of America's most blighted and crime-infested neighborhoods. But it still had its quieter corners, inhabited by people who made enough to carve out a decent existence—people who, generally speaking, had already lifted themselves a rung or two up the economic ladder and were living comfortably.

Carolyn McKenzie, the family's 40-year-old matriarch, was one of those people. A native of Mississippi who had three daughters at a young age and lived in the projects for part of her life, she eventually found work as a housekeeper at the Hotel Monteleone, in the French Quarter. It was there—over lunch at the cafeteria—that she met Terrell Woods, an assistant cook who would become her fiancé in 2005. With the money he and Carolyn earned, they were able to rent a shotgun-style, three-bedroom house with enough room for two of Carolyn's daughters and her grandson. They also had money to get new appliances and furniture.

The night that Hurricane Katrina struck, the family took advantage of an offer by the Monteleone to house employees and their relatives. That's where Randall joined them: He was married to Carolyn's other daughter, Tyneshia Seeden, and the father of her youngest child, four-month-old Deiontae. The storm itself proved easy enough to weather: just a lot of high wind and rain. But then came word that the entire Ninth Ward was underwater. At that point, Randall and Tyneshia decided to split off from the group in order to track down Randall's mother, who had been left in a hospital in Gretna, across the river, where the couple now lived. That left Carolyn, Terrell, and Carolyn's other daughters in charge of four children altogether, including Deiontae, who had—according to Tyneshia—nothing more than a diaper and a pacifier. The group ended up at the notorious Convention Center shelter but decided that, after a night of stepping over dead bodies and hiding from thugs, they were better off taking their chances with the elements. So they promptly made their way for the Interstate-10 elevated highway that ran through the city's central corridor, where they subsisted for two days on stray water bottles and other remnants left on the pavement until they managed to hitch a ride out of town on an empty water supply truck.

In Raceland, a small bayou town about an hour south of the city, the truck stopped so that people could use the bathrooms and the driver could make an inventory of everybody aboard. The passengers had gotten back in the truck when they heard shouts outside; when they lifted the doors again, heavily armed police officers were standing there, pointing guns. Somebody had apparently called the police, thinking the group was trying to rob the gas station. The police stood down when the driver explained the situation, eventually opening the store themselves and distributing drinks and food to the refugees. Afterward, they transferred the passengers to a shelter in Houma, the next city over.

The shelter was nothing like the Convention Center: It was clean and well-organized. But nobody really felt settled until Randall and Tyneshia finally rejoined the family a few days later. (In Gretna, the couple had learned that Ran-

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dall's mother was safe at a nursing home.) And, even after the reunion, stability remained elusive. The family could not stay at the shelter forever—and it quickly became apparent that, despite President Bush's soothing words, federal help might be slow, ineffectual, or both.

Writing for *The New Yorker*, Katherine Boo filed a dispatch from the shelter in which she chronicled the stratagem many families employed: putting on a good face that might attract interest from charitable organizations around the country that were looking to help hurricane victims—or, at least, the most worthy among them. The Anderson family decided to do the same, which, in their case, meant putting 18-year-old Alicia front and center. Obliging a photographer from the local newspaper, the Houma *Courier*, she posed for a series called "FACES OF KATRINA." She was wearing a white polo shirt and khaki pants, as if she'd just stepped out of parochial school; under her picture, a caption explained, "She is grateful for all the help from the shelter and thankful for her life and family."

LYNN MCLEOD COULDN'T handle the images of Katrina's devastation flashing across the TV screen. At one point, she says, she literally burst into tears—until she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror and thought, *well, that's pathetic*. If she was so upset, she ought to do something about it. Her parents had once undertaken such an endeavor, sponsoring a family from Vietnam that had relocated to South Bend, Indiana, during the early '70s. Maybe, she began to wonder, she could do the same thing. After her husband, Bryan, mentioned that his church men's group was also looking for a way to help hurricane victims, Lynn started to think about an old, vacant house she usually saw on the way home.

It was a split-level, ranch-style house just a few doors down from where Lynn lived, in a racially mixed, middle-class section of town near the campus of Western Michigan University. With five bedrooms, the house itself would be perfect for a large family—the kind of dwelling, Lynn figured, that would be in high demand for hurricane victims. But it was also something of a mess. Lynn approached the property's manager with an offer: If he'd agree to accept FEMA rental vouchers for 18 months, the church group would fix up the home and the property. The manager agreed, Lynn says, and soon the group embarked on its renovation project.

One of the people who heard about the project, through a website posting, was Ann Berglund. Like Lynn, she had been stirred to action by the images on television; and, like Lynn, she was a housewife with spare time to devote to a cause. She showed up at the house one morning, thinking she'd end up wielding a paint brush or maybe a mop. But, within a few days, she had effectively become the project's site manager, directing the renovation efforts on the ground while Lynn worked the phones from an office, making all of the other arrangements necessary to enable a relocation.

It was quite an enterprise. According to Ann and Lynn, the college students who previously occupied the house had trashed it—apparently because of a fight they had with the landlord—kicking in walls and shattering glass bottles all over the downstairs den. In the span of about three weeks, the volunteers managed to undo all of that. After sweeping away the mess and repairing the walls, they painted and acquired brand-new appliances. They even got the local Radisson Plaza Hotel to donate furniture. Logs show that hundreds of people would eventually contribute to the effort—some of them local students fulfilling public service requirements, others just folks in the community.

One big issue remained, of course: finding a family. Through Catholic Charities, Lynn reached Roxanne Bergeron, the Houma shelter manager in charge of resettling the displaced hurricane victims holed up there. Lynn had heard that some religious charities were limiting themselves to families of the same denomination or demanding that the families be traditional, with no unwed mothers and such. Lynn made it clear to Roxanne that the Kalamazoo Catholics had no such restrictions. They'd take people of any faith—and they weren't too picky about marriage or other family structure issues, either. The only thing that mattered, Lynn said, was that it be a family with young children, since that's who the church group felt probably needed the most help.

That led Roxanne to the Anderson family, as the shelter officials had started calling them. Roxanne had come to know them a bit better than some of the other refugees, in part because they seemed so visibly traumatized by their separation during the storm. Indeed, because of that separation, they said they were determined to stay together as one family. But that made placing them difficult: It was tough to find housing even for childless couples, let alone a family unit that now numbered nine. The house in Kalamazoo seemed like an ideal solution, particularly since Randall's mother was from Detroit, giving him ties to the area. Roxanne was particularly optimistic about the possibility, because the Anderson family seemed like the type that would thrive in such an environment, given their work history and relatively stable income before the storm.

Roxanne asked the Anderson family if they would be willing to relocate, and, after discussing the situation, they agreed. Soon, word spread around the shelter about the family that was getting adopted by the town in Michigan. It seemed like proof that miracles were possible—that perhaps something good could come out of something almost unimaginably bad.

IT WAS AROUND 1 a.m. on September 21 when a volunteer van carrying the Anderson family arrived in Kalamazoo, following a three-hour ride from the airport in Flint, Michigan. Just a handful of volunteers met them at the house, Ann and Lynn among them, figuring the group would be tired from the journey and in desperate need of rest. But, a couple of days later, the official business began.

It started with a house call from a visiting nurse that Ann and Lynn had recruited to assess the family's health and

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make sure there were no critical medical needs. Over the next few days, the two women shepherded the family through a carefully orchestrated plan designed to integrate them into middle-class Kalamazoo life—registering the kids for school, obtaining drivers' licenses for the adults, and so on. The work was tedious and, frequently, time-consuming, particularly when it involved trying to track down official records still in Louisiana. But it was the right thing to do, Ann remembers thinking, because it's the way she'd want somebody to treat her if she were ever in the same situation. "In my view, we were doing the responsible thing," she says today. "It would have felt kind of rude to just hand them the key and say, 'Bye, have a nice life.' "

But, to the Anderson family, the attention wasn't entirely welcome. They certainly had no desire to be abandoned, Randall agrees, but they also needed time to breathe. "From day one in the shelter, everybody kept coming in, saying, 'Oh, we feel so sorry for you, but what do you plan to do next?' We ain't even had a chance to get all this, to absorb what happened to us. ... The same thing happened once we got here. It was like, every day somebody is basically telling us, 'Tomorrow you got to go do this.' " According to Randall, one of the women with the church group gave the family a calendar and suggested they hang it on the wall. "She said, 'I wrote down the whole week, what you're going to have to do, and at this time, and at this time, and at this time.' And basically we just said ... 'Leave us alone for at least one weekend. Let us get our minds straight through all of this and have a little family time to get our heads together.' "

More trouble followed. Shortly after the family first arrived, Lynn told the *Kalamazoo Gazette*, "These are not charity cases; this is a humanitarian effort. We are restoring their lives, and they will pick up the pieces themselves. They will know what to do with themselves, and they will know what to do with their families." But, within a few weeks, she, Ann, and others working with the church group started to have doubts. A group member who happened to be a local physician had arranged for his medical group to take on the family as patients, initially for no charge. Ann then took them to the office and gave them business cards, complete with the practice's address and phone number. But, soon, word spread that some family members were not showing up for their appointments.

Money, though, was the overriding concern. Ann and Lynn kept warning the Andersons about the intense Michigan winters—and the cost of winter clothing and heating bills. Yet, even though the adults were finding work and making money, Ann and Lynn didn't see the Andersons making any preparations. At one point, they heard the Anderson family had acquired a car, even though the church group had provided them with a minivan. Meanwhile, Lynn started hearing from the landlord: He said he hadn't received any rent.

In November, both sides agreed to sit down for a meeting at the house. The official agenda was to work out the arrangements for the one big piece of unfinished business from the move: transporting Randall's mother, still in a Louisiana nursing home, to Michigan. The unofficial agenda was to talk about the growing discontent and, hopefully, reduce it. But precisely the opposite happened. When the church group's representatives arrived at the house, Lynn says, a few of the family members showed off some new tattoos that they had gotten. And she noticed that Randall had acquired some new accoutrements, as well. "He's a huge man, with a full length leather jacket and a watch as big as a saucer," Lynn says. "They were showing us their new tattoos, and the kids had no coats." When the group sat down at the kitchen table, tempers began to flare when Lynn started asking questions about whether they had used FEMA relief money properly and whether Randall had taken some of his mother's money—and how he had been spending it.

Randall took strong exception to the accusations, denying impropriety. Later, he and the rest of the family would tell a very different story about the events that had led up to that meeting. They say they missed a few medical appointments, but only because they thought it was more important to find jobs; they deny—emphatically—that they ever skimped on clothing or other essentials for the children. As for the electronics that seemed to bother Ann and Lynn so much, they say they just wanted to replace what they had in New Orleans, such as a television for every adult. "Before we came here, we lived nice, we had what we wanted," Tyneshia says. "If [Ann and Lynn] had lost their house, they would try to get back everything they had if they could, the same way that we did." (Both Randall and Tyneshia also say they bought most of their televisions with their own money.)

Yes, they got another car, they said. But it was a cheap one—a used green station wagon—and pretty much essential for such a large family to function properly, given that three young children had to get to school and most of the adults were working at overlapping hours. "They were like, 'Why do you need another car? Where is the money coming from?' " Carolyn says. "And I'm like, 'That's really none of your business. We needed another vehicle.' "

As for the rent, Randall and Carolyn acknowledge that they hadn't paid it as of November. But they said there was a good reason: They hadn't realized they owed it, let alone the amount and where it was supposed to go. According to the family, when they accepted the offer to relocate to Kalamazoo, they assumed that they would get to live in the house rent-free for up to 18 months. (Roxanne Bergeron, the woman who had managed the shelter, confirms that the initial offer from Kalamazoo was for "free rent"—at the time, nobody said anything about using FEMA vouchers.) And, while Ann says that notes from the November meeting show that the church group provided Randall with the landlord's contact information and the amount the family owed, the family says it was impossible to pay afterward because they couldn't get the landlord to return their calls and give them a formal lease. And, without a formal lease, they said, it was impossible to get the FEMA rental assistance that was supposed to cover the costs. (When con-

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tacted, the landlord declined to comment.)

By the end of the meeting, the Anderson family had made it clear what they wanted: for everybody to mind their own business. Both Ann and Lynn say they did precisely that afterward, disengaging from the project and leaving it in the hands of Paula White, a nurse whom the church group had asked previously to help the family. (At the time, Ann was starting a new job, anyway.) But, while the tension subsided, the Anderson family's problems with the landlord didn't. They never did pay the rent, and, in the late spring, they got a letter demanding they vacate the house. They decided to do that, and, on Independence Day, they decamped for a house on Kalamazoo's South Side, the unofficial city ghetto.

On a recent July morning, I stopped by the Andersons' new house, a two-story detached home catty-corner from a large discount store. Carolyn led me into the family's living room, still mostly empty save for a couch and a big-screen television—donated by Terrell's boss at the Radisson, where he now worked—that was turned on. Shortly into our conversation, Randall arrived home from his direct-care job at a hospice.

As he sat in a chair, gently juggling Deiontae in his thick arms, he said he doesn't want anybody to think he or his family isn't grateful. He just feels like the Kalamazoo church group misled the family—failing to live up to the promises made before the move last September. "A lot of people are doing right by us, and we appreciate it all; we're not even mad at the people who got us out here, really," Anderson says in a calm voice. "Just particularly Lynn McLeod, who was the leader. She's telling everybody different stories. ... She's basically the whole problem."

Ann and Lynn, in turn, say the Anderson family is lying. Lynn is blunt with her frustration, accusing the family of "gluttonous, piggish behavior," and she is disappointed by the result. Ann is a bit more circumspect—and philosophical. "I think, when you give, you give freely," she says. "And you cannot have an expectation once you give."

Despite their frustration, both Lynn and Ann remain proud of what the community accomplished—and committed to the idea that the kind of project they undertook really could work. As proof, they point to the success of another black family they helped relocate from New Orleans to Kalamazoo. That family, also from the Ninth Ward, has thrived. And they have shown the Kalamazoo community activists the kind of appreciation they hoped to get from the Anderson family. A few months ago, they invited the volunteers who helped them to attend a dinner. "They would not allow us to bring so much as a can of beans to the party," Ann says. "They said, 'No, it's our way to thank you for what you've done.' It's a very different experience."

Still, it's also a different group of people. Jesse Spells, at 51 the family's senior member, left the projects long ago. The son of a two-parent family—something "unusual for that particular area," he notes—he not only finished high school but went through two years of college, eventually working in electronics manufacturing. "I was pretty blessed," he says. His family has no young children, either: It's just Jesse and his girlfriend, plus her college-age son and the son's girlfriend, along with the girlfriend's family. Nor do they live under one roof: They're in three separate apartments.

Moreover, for all of the tensions, the Andersons seem to have settled into a relatively comfortable existence themselves. Even Ann and Lynn take some delight in the apparent success of Terrell: While he isn't making nearly as much at the Radisson as he did when he was at the Monteleone, he hopes to move up the ladder—and, given the high regard his boss has for him, he may do so in the not-too-distant future. Randall, Tyneshia, and Carolyn all have jobs, too. Their new house is neither as big nor as nice as the one they first had in Kalamazoo, but—with a front porch and high-ceilinged living room—it's not exactly a dump, either. And, while Kalamazoo's South Side has a bad reputation locally, it is, if anything, a step up from their home in New Orleans. "In the Ninth Ward ... people were selling drugs all day long. You couldn't even get out your own door without seeing people selling drugs," Carolyn says. "For the kids, Michigan is a much better place."

Paula White, the parish nurse charged with following the case, is one of the few people connected to this story with anything resembling distance. And, while she has understood the church group's concerns, particularly regarding the family's financial priorities, she also remembers something Randall told her one day: "Randy had said to us, our style is to manage day to day, not month to month and year to year. And, if we can make it today, that's fine, and we'll worry about tomorrow when it comes." She says she sees that attitude frequently in low-income communities—perhaps because, in so many cases, worrying about the long term would simply be too daunting given their daily struggles.

The church group sponsoring the Anderson family clearly hoped that they would break out of that mindset. And, writ large, that was always the unspoken hope many people held about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina—that the experience of starting anew might actually leave the hurricane's victims better off than before, that they would find not just opportunities but renewed ambition, as well. But that's quite a leap to expect from people who went through what the Anderson family did, whatever their race or economic background. "These people lost everything they had, the life that they had built, whatever it was—good, bad, or indifferent," Paula notes. "You talk about people going through grief needing a year or more. One of the things they tell you is, 'Don't make major changes.' Yet look at all the changes they had to make in a year." Indeed, twelve months after surviving Katrina, the Andersons are living in a decent house, holding down decent jobs, and are even, according to their own estimation, getting by just a little better than they were before. All things considered, maybe that's not such a bad ending after all. ■

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The rise and decline of the New Orleans jail.

Empire Falls

BY DAVID MORTON

With Hurricane Katrina still over the Gulf of Mexico, Orleans Parish Criminal Sheriff Marlin Gusman, New Orleans's chief jailer, convened his ranking officers for an emergency meeting. Present in the sheriff's conference room that Saturday were most of his wardens, as well as the officer in charge of supplies and the head of the jail's kitchen, a huge feeding operation that prepared more than 18,000 meals per day. The sheriff went around the table, asking the officers if they were prepared for a storm. With an average population of about 6,000 inmates, the Orleans Parish Prison was the country's ninth-largest jail. But evacuating the jail in advance of Katrina was not up for debate. No detailed evacuation plan even existed.

This was Gusman's first hurricane season as sheriff. He was a 50-year-old attorney and public administrator with an impressive list of degrees and a substantial career at City Hall. He had been elected to the post just ten months earlier, the first black criminal sheriff in the city's history. Gusman had yet to develop a rapport with his senior staff, most of them holdovers from the previous regime. But he had made an impression. Tall and well-built, with a neatly trimmed salt-and-pepper mustache, he carried himself like a banker—formal and somewhat aloof. He rarely raised his voice. Though he hadn't instituted major changes since taking office, he had demanded more training for his guards and demonstrated a bean counter's concern for the bottom line, strictly monitoring all purchases and cracking down on officers who clocked in late.

Now, as the storm approached, he was responsible for protecting one of the densest concentrations of humanity in the city. The jail complex, located about a mile and a half from downtown in a blighted neighborhood of rickety shotgun houses and century-old industrial buildings, consisted of a dozen installations scattered between the interstate and busy Tulane Avenue. There was the House of Detention, an aging ten-story tower with a psychiatric ward. A block away was the big, buff-colored cube called the Community Correctional Center, which housed Gusman's offices. Across the street and behind a high concrete wall were five newer dormitory-like structures called the Templeman buildings. At one end of the facility was a work-release center (in a former elementary school), and at the other, a half-mile away, was the Conchetta women's facility (a converted motel).

In addition to his own inmates, Gusman was also responsible for hundreds of prisoners who had been evacuated to his jail in advance of the storm from neighboring parishes—not to mention his own staff of hundreds of deputy sheriffs, as well as their husbands, wives, children, and pets, who often rode out storms under the jail's roof. But, this time, the jail wasn't fully prepared for them—or, at least, it wasn't prepared for the worst. According to one person present at the Saturday meeting, the supplies chief informed the sheriff that they had a limited number of flashlights and batteries to power both flashlights and radios. The bottled water in stock might not last very long.

The kitchen chief brought up another problem. If there were flooding as high as there had been some years before, it would be difficult to get meals from the kitchen to the various far-flung detention facilities. And, if entrances were flooded, they would need to break through the facilities' concrete walls somehow. "Absolutely not!" the normally reserved sheriff snapped. "You're not going to cut into my buildings."

For the new sheriff, the jail wasn't just holding cells and high fences. It was one of the great prizes of New Orleans politics—so precious because it was so big. Over the previous 30 years, the jail had grown tenfold, and the political currency of the criminal sheriff had appreciated with it. By the time Gusman took the job, he alone controlled an annual budget exceeding $70 million, and he could spend that money virtually however he wished, doling out jail contracts to friends and supporters. With no civil service protections shielding his roughly 1,200 employees, the sheriff had at his disposal a huge and ready supply of political foot soldiers. The mayor, by contrast, only had some 200 such "unclassified" workers. In the past, the sheriff's machine had been able to deliver thousands of votes to a candidate of his choice; his greater strength, even more difficult to measure, was in his ability to ward off opposition to candidates he favored before a challenge even mounted. And so, depending on whom you asked, the sheriff of Orleans Parish was second in pull only to the mayor, perhaps his equal, or possibly his better.

That the sheriff should have so much clout reveals how much New Orleans's mania for incarceration warped the political culture and how the political culture, in turn, created a profoundly unjust penal system. Before Katrina, no major jurisdiction in America jailed people at a faster clip. On any given day, about 4 percent of the city's working-age

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males resided under the sheriff's lock and key. Putting all these people behind bars had little effect on violent crime—senseless death was depressingly quotidian in New Orleans, even before Katrina. But, once the jail became a vital component of the city's political machinery, it became difficult to turn off the switch. So it kept growing. Fear had built the jail, but hubris made it an empire. Over a few days last August, before Gusman even had a chance to enjoy his new dominion, the empire fell.

THAT SATURDAY NIGHT, with the city evacuating, the Maple Leaf bar uptown was celebrating Midsummer Mardi Gras. Raphael Schwarz, a 23-year-old cook, stood outside with a drink in one hand and a cell phone in the other, calling a friend for his own ride out of town. While still on the phone, he was picked up for public drunkenness and taken to the jail.

As usual, much of the population of the Orleans Parish Prison was locked up on misdemeanor drug charges and minor municipal infractions. According to the inmate master list, Schwarz's cellblock included several people arrested for public drunkenness or disturbing the peace. By the time Schwarz arrived, cells were packed, and inmates were sleeping in the dayroom—on tables and on mats on the floor. More ominously, though the power was still on, the phones had gone out. On Sunday, anxious to call relatives and find out about Katrina plans, inmates grew tense. Schwarz, unable to call a lawyer, lay on a bunk below the cellblock's blaring television and tried to sleep.

Early Monday morning, August 29, Katrina made landfall. Schwarz hazily remembers waking up in the middle of the night to hear the guards announcing that there would be no breakfast. He woke up again, this time to shouting and with four inches of water on the floor. The guards had disappeared from their command module. As in other parts of the jail, inmates drew the conclusion that they had been abandoned, left to die—and, to get out, they began to take the jail apart. In Schwarz's cellblock, on the ground floor of Templeman Phase III, inmates crashed a mop bucket against a window that separated them from the corridor.

The commotion didn't last long. Guards showed up again, about 15 of them, armed with pepper spray and batons. To forestall a riot and to get the inmates out of the water, they hurriedly relocated them. Schwarz ended up stuffed in a cell on the second tier of the block with a view down on the dayroom. A six-by-eight-foot unit, built for two inmates, now held eight. Among them was a jumpy man who, by kicking at the cell door, got them all pepper-sprayed. Squeezed into tight quarters, they reached a compromise: Two would sleep on the top bunk, two on the bottom, and four on the floor, heads alternating with feet.

That evening, the power went out and the water started to rise. In the dim light, they watched it fill the dayroom below like a pool; it gradually turned brown with sewage from overflowing toilets. Schwarz saw his socks and shirt float away from the table where he had left them. When the inmates saw the water's surface ripple, they started shouting—someone was wading through the corridor and might come to rescue them. When they heard helicopters overhead, they waved their orange prison shirts outside a damaged window to catch someone's attention. There was no food or water. Schwarz occupied himself by banging his hands against the wall, trying to induce drops to fall from the cell faucet. Working at it for several hours, he could fill half of an eight-ounce plastic cup, and then he'd pass it around for everyone to take a sip.

All over the complex, there were breakout attempts and some, at least temporary, successes. It was as hard for the guards to know what was going on as it was for the inmates. With the radio system and phone lines down, communication was almost nonexistent. Word traveled by shouts or was sent via messengers on the few boats that could be found. Whatever orders Gusman might have given, many people didn't hear them. Officers in the lower ranks had to decide for themselves how to handle the deteriorating situation. In most of the buildings, inmates were thought to be roaming the corridors, and some guards and their supervisors considered it too dangerous to return to their command modules or to deliver water bottles or food or medicine to the cellblocks. Some, though, were willing to hazard the risk.

Platoons made sorties through their buildings, armed with pen-knives, broomsticks, and pepper spray to force inmates back into cellblocks. They heard frightening sounds above them—loud booms "like a bomb going off," one former guard says. They later discovered that inmates had torn metal tables from where they were bolted to the floor and used them to ram through cinderblock walls.

Tyrone Davis, a 27-year-old guard in Templeman III, fetched a crowbar to release dozens of inmates still trapped in ground-floor cells with water past their waists. Some locks were jammed from the water; some doors were stuck in place, having been kicked off their rails by inmates trying to get out; some doors couldn't be opened because the one set of keys was with a watch commander who had evacuated to another facility. Davis and other guards worked in teams of three to pry the doors open. Eighteen hours later, working without stopping, the job was done.

The evacuation of the jail began on Tuesday, when state correctional officers arrived in force. More than 7,000 people were ferried from the complex to a nearby highway overpass, four to six at a time, in the few boats at hand. Getting everyone to the bridge—and from there onto buses parked on the highway—would take more than three days. Schwarz and his cellmates were freed by other guards sometime Thursday, after over three days together. As Davis came outside, he could see the signs of desperate escape. Sheets had been tied together and unfurled from holes made in the concrete walls. Inmates had lit mattresses on fire to signal for help, and cellblocks billowed with smoke. Three inmates had jumped from a building into the barbed wire of an adjacent fence, and

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guards were now at work trying to untangle them.

On the overpass, conditions weren't much better. The inmates had been moved from stifling cellblocks onto hot asphalt. Standing between them and the hundreds of civilians who shared the bridge were maybe a dozen or so officers. Davis counted his rounds. He had 21 bullets for his holstered .357 Magnum and eight shells for his shotgun.

It was there that Davis saw the sheriff for the first time since Monday afternoon. He was speaking to a TV news crew. Like many guards, Davis hadn't had food, water, or sleep for days. He had been waist- to chest-deep in sewage water for much of that time, urinating wherever he stood. Gusman, though, in his black sheriff's cap and rubber boots, looked collected and camera-ready. "Every time I saw him," Davis later remarked, "he was clean-shaved."

GUSMAN ISN'T REFLECTIVE about his Katrina experience. His posture is pure defense; his spin since the storm has been to describe the evacuation as orderly, even miraculous, and to dismiss contrary accounts as the fabrications of "crackheads, cowards, and criminals," as he told *New Orleans CityBusiness*, a local weekly newspaper, earlier this year. "There were some people who died on the roofs of their homes, in their attics, in nursing homes, in hospitals," he said in a more recent interview. "They weren't dying here. Now, did they have inconvenience? ... Did they have hardship? Yes. It was difficult. But don't try to equate it with the people in this community who lost their lives."

The state's attorney general, New Orleans's former longtime criminal sheriff, praised Gusman for the largest evacuation of a jail or prison in American history, accomplished with no immediate loss of life. Among some of the jail's rank-and-file, though, the impression lingered that Gusman got lucky. Not only was the jail unprepared for a catastrophe, they believed that the sheriff didn't get his hands dirty during those days of flooding and chaos—that he "didn't smell like we did." This picture was filled out by the National Prison Project of the American Civil Liberties Union, which collected more than 1,300 inmate accounts of the evacuation, any sampling of which consistently tells a tale of abandonment, violence, and a lack of food and water.

In another respect, the damage the sheriff suffered was profound. Much of his complex, the basis of his newly won power, was ruined. The flood destroyed the electrical systems of nearly every facility. Holes punctured several buildings. About half of the vehicle fleet was destroyed. An estimated $1.4 million in computer equipment and $2 million worth of inmate jumpsuits and bedding needed to be replaced. And the main medical facility was wiped out.

As for the jail's inmates, Gusman's main source of revenue—bringing in anywhere from $22.39 to $43.50 per head each day—they were moved to others' care. Thousands had been evacuated temporarily to a recreation yard at Elayn Hunt Correctional Center, a state prison about 70 miles inland. Detainees of all kinds were thrown together, no bars between them, and reunited gangs roamed the field settling scores. For several days, the inmates slept in the open, in the rain, until buses came and began transferring them to other facilities.

Much of the sheriff's workforce was gone, too. Some quit when the storm hit, others later, when the stress overwhelmed them. On the terrace of one building, a cleanup crew collected two trashbags' worth of standard-issue SHERIFF T-shirts with badges still attached. Many officers who worked through the evacuation never returned and became part of the great Katrina diaspora. Gusman's empire wasn't just a collection of empty, broken shells along the interstate; it was in pieces, scattered all over the country. As with the rest of the city, the job of putting it together again would take years. But, on the political calendar, that was a long lag time. Gusman was up for reelection in eight months, and a diminished jail meant a diminished incumbent.

IT TOOK A couple of days to wreck Orleans Parish Prison, but it had taken decades to build it. The man who first realized the jail's political potential was an industrious police department attorney (and a second cousin of the then-Mayor Moon Landrieu) named Charles Foti. When Foti became criminal sheriff in 1974, Orleans Parish Prison was a single building. Built in 1929, it was attached to the criminal courthouse and held 800 prisoners. By the time Foti left the office, in 2004, the jail possessed its own skyline. This was due, in part, to changes in criminal justice practices, as well as Foti's talent for tapping alternative funding streams. He maintained a large population of sentenced felons contracted from the state. But his greatest innovation was to aggressively pursue contracts to house federal inmates, which brought in about twice as much money as the state's or city's did.

Louisiana's growing incarceration obsession played a role in the jail's expansion. In the 1980s and 1990s, the state eagerly embraced the drug war and the movement toward mandatory minimum sentences. And, like other cities in the '90s, New Orleans instituted a zero-tolerance policing strategy—believing that, to attack the big crimes, you had to go after the quality-of-life crimes, too. But New Orleans took this strategy to an extreme. Though it habitually ranks among the country's most violent cities, its proportion of arrests for violent crime is less than half the national figure, according to FBI statistics.

Foti actively influenced the policing culture. When inmate levels fluctuated and jail beds became empty, he encouraged the police to make more arrests, and he hustled up business from nearby parishes with overcrowded jails and nowhere to put their own inmates. As a result, although the population of the city was shrinking during these years, the jail—and Foti's power—continued to grow.

With so many bodies at his disposal, Foti could get hundreds of inmates into the city's neighborhoods painting murals or working on clean-up crews. They became a familiar sight in their bright orange jumpsuits, guarded by men with

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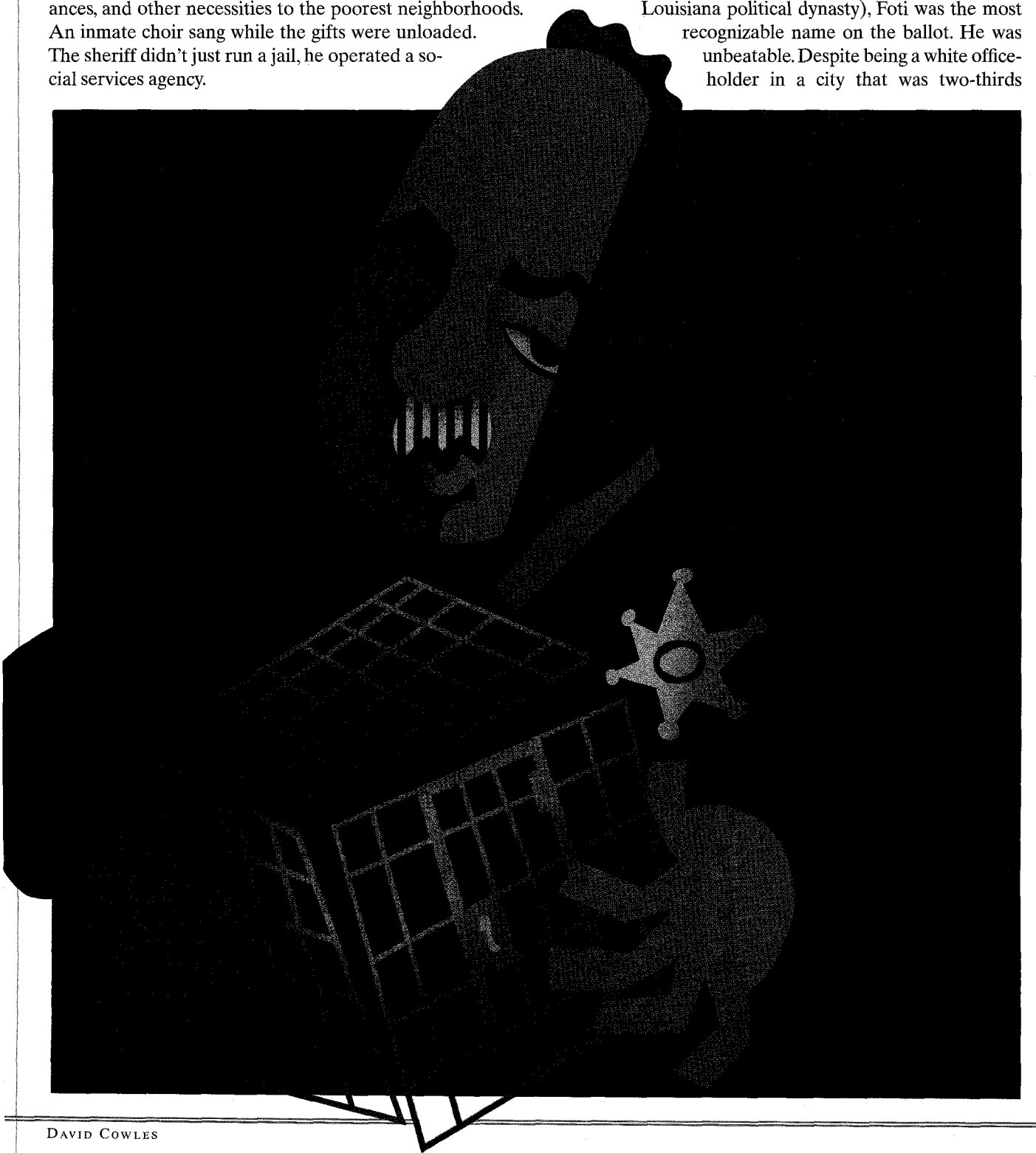
shotguns wearing T-shirts printed with SHERIFF across the chest and back. The Halloween haunted house in City Park was an annual Foti production—assembled by inmates and manned by deputy sheriffs. So was the big Thanksgiving Day feast at the downtown Hyatt Regency Hotel, where volunteers served thousands of prison-donated meals to the elderly, while the paunchy, spectacled sheriff presided over it all, chewing an unlit cigar. On Christmas Day, a caravan of deputy sheriffs toured the city delivering furniture, appliances, and other necessities to the poorest neighborhoods. An inmate choir sang while the gifts were unloaded. The sheriff didn't just run a jail, he operated a social services agency.

Foti's power sometimes put him at odds with other city officials. Gusman, when he was working for the mayor, accused Foti of releasing inmates from custody just past midnight, so that the sheriff could squeeze an extra day's worth of payments from the city. Foti further frustrated the mayor and the City Council by refusing to spell out the details of his budget.

But, come election time, with the exception of the occasional Morial (father and son mayors) or Landrieu (a Louisiana political dynasty), Foti was the most recognizable name on the ballot. He was unbeatable. Despite being a white officeholder in a city that was two-thirds



DAVID COWLES

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black, he was consistently elected either unopposed or with more than 70 percent of the vote. Given his standing in New Orleans—and the hundreds of political workers under his command—other candidates genuflected for his endorsement. His support was vital to the elections of fellow Democrats, such as U.S. Senator Mary Landrieu (his cousin) and Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco. In 2004, capitalizing on 30 years of empire-building, the sheriff propelled himself into the state attorney general's office.

IT WAS PERHAPS due to Foti's legacy that Gusman, a polished technocrat with no previous experience in corrections, came to want the job. Gusman was a city councilman for four years before becoming sheriff. For most of his career, though, his role in politics had been out of the spotlight—as a capable hand to the men in power.

Gusman followed a careful path of achievement. He collected an array of academic credentials, earning a dual undergraduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania's School of Arts and Sciences and Wharton School and a law degree from Loyola University. He also attended an executive education program at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. At 29, Gusman was made a department head under Mayor Ernest "Dutch" Morial. After Dutch was elected the city's first black mayor in 1978—when the majority of New Orleans voters were still white—he founded the Louisiana Independent Federation of Electors (LIFE). LIFE grew to become one of the most successful of the black political organizations that sought to wrest power from the entrenched white elite that ran the city. In its heyday, it benefited from all the time-honored tactics of machine politics: aggressive door-to-door operations in low-income neighborhoods, horse-trading, and patronage.

Gusman became a loyal soldier and an intricate part of Morial's political machine. In the '90s, during the administration of Dutch's son, Marc, Gusman was the mayor's second-in-command. Marc Morial and Gusman had been friends since they were classmates at an elite local Jesuit high school. Among the many strong personalities in the Morial circle, Gusman came to be known as a cool operator. "Marlin was even-keeled, quiet, said little at the political meetings. But, when he said something, we all paid attention," says Bill Schultz, a onetime Morial ally who ran the campaign to unseat Gusman this spring.

In 2000, Gusman ran for his first elected office—a seat on the City Council. He was a bit stiff on the stump. But he cast an aura of caution and competence. "He's an effective one-on-one campaigner," says community organizer Jacques Morial, Marc's younger brother and the current head of LIFE. "Old ladies love him."

In 2004, when Foti assumed his new office, Gusman saw an opportunity to move beyond the confines of his council district. LIFE saw an opportunity for Gusman as well. In recent years, it had seen its power wane. After Marc finished his second term as mayor and left to head the National Urban League in New York City, LIFE lacked a candidate in high office. "They've just never been able to move away from the cult of personality for the Morials," says political consultant Cheron Brylski, Dutch's former press secretary. Moreover, when Marc left office, his time as mayor was widely considered a success. But, since then, there have been accusations of corruption. A federal investigation of his administration's contracting practices so far has resulted in the indictments of several of Marc's associates. LIFE, like other New Orleans political organizations, was also affected by a simple demographic change: Since the mid-'80s, the majority of voters and officeholders in New Orleans have been black, and the practical need to channel votes through political organizations has faded. In fact, a candidate could benefit from some distance from the political machines. It had become apparent that, for most of New Orleans, they simply hadn't delivered. A poor city hadn't gotten appreciably richer.

Ray Nagin may be the lead indicator of the shift in the political culture. Nagin, who is black, has now been elected twice as mayor without major backing from any of the city's black political organizations. In 2002, after winning his first election, he pledged to clean up the corrupt City Hall he said Morial had left behind.

With the Morials in power and Foti around, the jail had never before entered into LIFE's calculations. But for Gusman—now the group's top office holder and standard-bearer—the position of sheriff, with its visibility and unmatched political advantages, had new worth, not just for itself, but also as a counterweight to Nagin.

Gusman, of course, didn't articulate any of this calculus in his job application. His official line is that, as sheriff, he could "attack crime at its roots." That is, he was interested in the rehabilitative programs at the jail. But the jail didn't make headlines for its rehabilitative programs. It has been subject to judicial supervision for more than three decades—as a product of one of the longest active class-action suits in American corrections—due to ongoing failures in conditions and medical treatment. Neglect has been systematic. One guard might be responsible for the supervision of some 120 inmates, says Rhonda Ducre, a former guard who worked in the House of Detention facility for four years. Inmates could pop their cells with just a plastic fork or spoon and attack other inmates without guards hearing a thing, "unless one of them had the courage to holler out," she says. In recent years, there have been a number of avoidable jail deaths. A few months before Katrina, two guards were indicted for beating an inmate to death the year before—an inmate brought in for public drunkenness. "Frequently, an inmate would die, and you would never hear anything about it on the news," says Joshua Callaway, a former guard.

The post-Katrina reconstruction of the city tends to inspire visions of a better New Orleans. People speak of starting from a clean slate for institutions that previously had been resistant to improvement, such as the school system or public housing or the courts. In reality, though, meeting the pre-Katrina standard is difficult enough. Some

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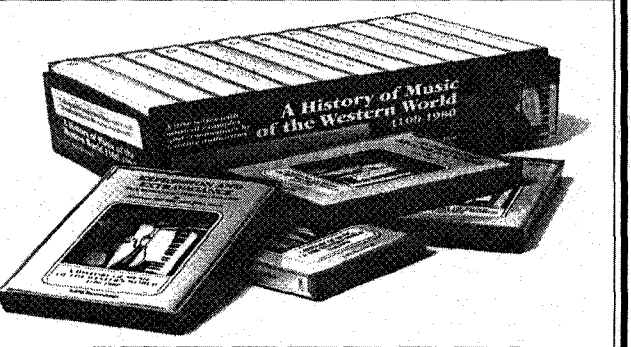

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people, including the criminal sheriff, would be satisfied just to get things back to where they used to be and to do so as quickly as possible.

If KATRINA SEEMED to have overwhelmed the sheriff, getting the jail operating again showed off his managerial tenacity. Gusman wasted no time. Flooding had spared the cellblocks of the House of Detention, which started at the third floor, so it was easier to bring it back online. When the water level subsided, a small generator was set up outside, and officers took turns fueling it with buckets of diesel.

The state had established a temporary courthouse and detention center at the Greyhound bus station a couple of miles away, near the Superdome, to deal with new arrestees. A public defender there informed minor offenders, such as alleged curfew breakers, that, if they pleaded "not guilty," they would be sent to a state penitentiary to await further adjudication—a process that, given the state of the courts and the absence of defense attorneys, could take weeks or months. Or they could plead "guilty" and then pay $200 or get 20 hours of community service. That might mean a few days hauling debris out of the jail.

The guards still in New Orleans and still on the payroll were put on trash duty, and even Gusman himself took part in removing the jail's moldy remains. Officers were in short supply, and, to lure some back, Gusman raised pay and purchased 22 trailers for guards to live in. He later set up two trailer camps at either end of the complex.

Gusman locked up his first new inmates on October 17, just seven weeks after Katrina. He opened his doors before any public school, the criminal courthouse, the district attorney's office, or police headquarters—the latter two buildings still sit vacant. The Orleans Parish Prison was an island in a city of wreckage—but still not fully functional. With most New Orleans hospitals closed, inmates in need of serious medical attention had to be transported to Baton Rouge or Independence, both about 70 miles away. And the jail lacked sufficient staff and equipment to support dialysis or AIDS treatment. Just before Christmas, the sheriff told *New Orleans CityBusiness* why he was repopulating the jail, despite lacking ready medical care for inmates: He wanted inmates out in the community, on work crews, "helping it rebuild."

Gusman was relentless. In October, with a cash-strapped City Hall forced to lay off thousands, the sheriff filed a motion in federal court against the city, seeking to collect on more than $3 million in outstanding jail bills for July and August, prior to Katrina. Nagin, Gusman's political rival, was outraged and called the move "incredibly insensitive and mean-spirited." But, Gusman explained, without inmates and the steady per-diem payments that came with them, he needed a way to pay his fixed costs. Perhaps the sheriff's motivation was spite; perhaps it was a practical ploy to force the mayor to seek funding from federal sources. On its face, though, it looked like a stubborn refusal to adjust to reality.

THIS SPRING, GUSMAN faced his first reelection campaign as sheriff. While his jail had begun to creep back to life, eight months after Katrina, the political machinery Gusman commanded was still broken, perhaps irreparably. From a campaigning standpoint, the jail was now useless to the sheriff. When he tried to deploy inmate cleaning crews into neighborhoods—in the past always an excellent, no-cost promotional tool—he lacked sufficient guards to look after them, and he had to scale back the program. Nor could he ask many of his guards to volunteer their free time for him. As it was, he was short-handed, and the few hundred staff on duty were already working overtime.

The city was drained of half its people. With the flooding and subsequent diaspora, whole neighborhoods had disappeared from the political map. Even if Gusman were at full staff, it's questionable what a political army of deputy sheriffs would have been able to accomplish. "What are you going to do with them on Election Day? Stand on a corner where no one lives?" asks Jacques Morial. "Knock on 200 doors and get no answer?"

Black neighborhoods were the hardest-hit areas. Gusman's own neighborhood in Gentilly—in the heart of Creole New Orleans—had been crawling back. New Orleans East, though, was almost uninhabitable, the Lower Ninth Ward completely so. The established order of black politics, already in decline, had been further decimated.

Jacques Morial says he and Gusman first discussed the changed political landscape about a week after the flooding subsided. They recognized early on that their biggest problem was that their traditional voters had been scattered all over the country, out of reach. Phone trees were now largely useless. For months, one of LIFE's main efforts was acquiring cell phone numbers and e-mail addresses, and only about a dozen core LIFE operatives had come back to town to do the work. Direct mail to absentee voters wasn't an option: The elections board resisted releasing their new addresses.

The jail became an obstacle for Gusman. He might have run unopposed, but, following the storm and evacuation, current and former high-ranking officers fed the local press their complaints about Gusman's Katrina performance. His opponent, Gerald DeSalvo, a young defense attorney with close ties to the police union, shaped his campaign entirely around the sheriff's alleged failures during Katrina. DeSalvo publicized the claims of one jail employee who attested to the chaos of the evacuation and said he saw a body bag allegedly containing a guard who died from smoke inhalation.

With ground operations crippled, Gusman's answer was television and radio—lots of it. His campaign spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to firmly establish the sheriff's own narrative of Katrina. In one ad, he was the sheriff who waded through the floodwaters with a cutting torch to free female inmates from the Conchetta facility. A DeSalvo supporter gathered witness testimony to dispute Gusman's claim in court.

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Yet Katrina hadn't destroyed funding sources for the campaign. Contractors, possibly with an eye toward business with the jail, contributed generously, and Gusman's spots were broadcast not just in New Orleans, but in Houston and Baton Rouge, where many New Orleans voters were staying. On April 22, Gusman crushed his relatively unknown challenger, winning a full four-year term by a margin of two to one. New Orleans evacuees, scattered about the country, had to make an extra effort to learn about the various candidates, says Russell Henderson, a community organizer and a former LIFE activist. "So they were going to vote for who they knew."

Before Gusman was first elected sheriff, he had made a number of promises to a coalition of prison reform groups. One of those promises was a smaller jail. Yet a significant reduction was never possible—because of the large debt incurred to build such a large jail in the first place. "If it weren't for the debt, it would be easier to shrink the prison size, perhaps to half the size," Jacques Morial says. "But [the sheriff] has to increase the prison population to pay the per diem, to pay the debt service." By that reasoning, the jail justifies the need for inmates, rather than inmates justifying the need for a jail.

But, in May, Gusman realized that, even if he had the inmates, he no longer had the space to house them. At the time, only a few of the prison's ten detention buildings were habitable. He informed Calvin Johnson, then the chief judge of criminal court, that at about 1,500 inmates—about one-fourth of its pre-storm population—the jail was overcrowded. With the jail at its extreme limit, the criminal justice system was forced to be more introspective about its policing practices: The judge released all detainees arrested for nonviolent misdemeanors. "We have a limited number of jail spaces, and we can't fill them with people charged with minor offenses such as disturbing the peace, trespassing or spitting on the sidewalk," Johnson told *The Times-Picayune*. "I'm not exaggerating: There were people in jail for spitting on the sidewalk."

GUSMAN HAS ALWAYS been media averse, and the coverage that followed Katrina made him more so. When *The New York Times* ran a story in May linked to a report about the treatment of incarcerated juveniles during the flooding, the sheriff offered no comment. The first attempts for an interview for this story were rebuffed. A media consultant advised Gusman's spokesperson to say that the sheriff was too busy. "He should say that preparations for the upcoming hurricane season will occupy his full-time attention," wrote Malcolm Ehrhardt, in an e-mail that he mistakenly sent to my inbox. Finally, a chance encounter with the sheriff in a New Orleans restaurant led to an interview, an hour later, at the jail.

The sheriff used to have his choice of offices, including a large wood-finished library that evoked an Ivy League school rather than a jail. Now his office is an air-conditioned RV. His spokesperson and a receptionist work in a trailer parked next to it. It was a hot June day. The sheriff took a bottle of water from the refrigerator, sat down in the leather driver's seat of the RV, and pointed out the window at the remains of his realm. Only five of his ten detention facilities were online, and the biggest ones were nowhere near reopening.

Gusman wasn't daunted by the challenge. Dressed in his royal blue shirt with a monogrammed cuff and a conservative tie, he acknowledged that, while space is tight, the system should discriminate when it comes to locking up major versus minor offenders. But he seemed unaware that New Orleans might want to adjust its long-term priorities.

New Orleans's population is currently half what it was before the storm, and the talk is of institutional downsizing: how to make everything both smaller and better. Gusman isn't interested. I asked if he had conducted any demographic projections so that he could match his rebuilding plans to a shrunken city population. "I'm not really focused on that," he said. "I don't know if there would be any real correlation between the population and the number of beds anyway." In fact, given the choice, the sheriff said he would prefer to build the jail back up to the pre-Katrina capacity, which was officially rated at more than 7,500 inmates. According to FEMA, the sheriff's office has requested $57 million to repair jail buildings, replace equipment, and cover overtime pay—and $31 million has already been allocated. Gusman indicated the area down the block where FEMA is funding the construction of a number of barrel-vaulted tents. The $5 million facility will house some 800 inmates. But even this won't be enough to fully resurrect the jail.

Without Foti's personality, without a strong LIFE, and with several thousand fewer bodies at the jail thanks to Katrina, the criminal sheriff's office is no longer untouchable. As the sheriff makes demands, it will be easier to question the role of the jail, the need to invest in locking up the people it does, and the largely hidden nature of its finances. The city officially owns half the buildings that constitute the jail, and Nagin, as the representative of a post-machine politics, has shown little interest in rebuilding. Gusman's power may continue to fade. In a bid to streamline government, the governor recently signed a provision to combine the office of civil sheriff—a less powerful position that oversees security at the civil courthouse—with criminal sheriff in 2010. It may pit Gusman against Paul Valteau, a LIFE ally and the highest vote-getter in the most recent citywide election. Other offices attached to the traditional political machinery, such as the city's assessor offices, also potentially face consolidation. Now, in the wake of Katrina, all are under threat, and, as the competition for resources plays out in the rebuilding of the city, there is a chance—a small one, perhaps—for some things to change. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Chabrol, Continued

GOING TO A NEW CHABROL film these days is like sitting down with an old friend who will tell you another one of his stories. Chabrol has been making films since 1958: the latest of his more than fifty features is **THE BRIDESMAID**, and another one has already been finished. He has co-written or co-adapted many of his pictures, and he has also played bit parts in some of them (as well as in the films of others). I have seen a lot of Chabrol's films, and many others must share my sense that much of my filmgoing life is threaded throughout with his work. He has always been a director who felt that moving ahead was at least as important as polishing a single work. This has sometimes let him present less than his best, but the sheer sweep of his career warmly compensates.

THE BRIDESMAID
(First Run)

By now a Chabrol film has become something of a family affair. His wife, Aurore, was the script supervisor of *The Bridesmaid*; one son, Thomas, plays a small part; another son, Matthieu, wrote the score; his stepdaughter, Cécile Maistre, was the first assistant director. Chabrol's career even began in family style. In the 1950s, his first wife inherited some money. The two of them were then able to produce his first picture, *Le Beau Serge*, and they also helped to launch what became, with Chabrol as a leader, the New Wave.

Early on, too, he showed his chief thematic interest. With Eric Rohmer—and before either of them had begun directing features—he wrote a book on Hitchcock. Much more than with Rohmer, the Hitchcock influence has often been discussed in regard to Chabrol's work because he is so continually concerned with crime and guilt and shadowed lives.

Obviously among so many films by one man there are variations in quality. An occasional picture, like his *Madame Bovary*, has been a dud. On the other hand, Chabrol has reached such heights—or should one say depths?—as *This Man Must Die*, about a man who hunts down the hit-and-run driver who killed his small son, and *Landru*, based on the same character as Chaplin's *Monsieur Verdoux*.

The Bridesmaid ranks high in the Chabrol roster. The first two minutes affirm his mastery. The film opens with a ride down a seaside street in an uninteresting neighborhood that ends at a house in front of which stand some people and a television reporter. She tells us of a crime that has been committed there. As she talks, the image converts into the screen of a television set, and the camera pulls back into the living room of some people who are watching. Thus, gently, we are reminded that crime is ready to appear anywhere, at any time, and that this imminence is nowadays a subliminal part of ordinary lives. In our minds, that opening becomes increasingly freighted as the film unfolds.

This is the home of Christine, a widowed hairdresser in her fifties, and her three children. Philippe, in his late twenties, is an executive in a construction firm; Sophie, twenty-three, is soon to be married; Patricia is a typically "difficult" adolescent. All of them are going to dinner that evening with Christine's boyfriend, Gérard, a man in his fifties, and Christine asks if she may give Gérard the life-size sculptured head of a woman in their garden that her friend has admired. All agree, so they take it along, and we can be sure that this head will figure in what is to come. (The closing credits roll over that head.)

Subtle touches abound. Early instance: Gérard had not expected Christine to bring her children to dinner. When they arrive, he swiftly closes the door to the dining room where a table has been set and takes them all to a restaurant. That swift door-closing is characterization by cinematic means.

At Sophie's wedding Philippe meets Senta, the bridegroom's cousin, who is a bridesmaid. (She adopted her name from *The Flying Dutchman*.) She is quiet but not reticent. This is quickly demonstrated when she follows Philippe home—he had to leave the wedding early—and very soon maneuvers him into bed.

Their affair continues at Senta's house, which she owns. Though it is large, she lives in the crummy basement. On the floor above, her stepmother, a dance teacher, practices the tango with her partner; above that are large rooms filled with white-sheeted furniture. Senta's cool-hot intensity, the force with which she tells Philippe that she has been waiting for him all her life, that she loved him at first sight, is intoxicating to Philippe and lifts him to her state of passion. In the course of time she recounts, truthfully or not, her lurid past in other countries. She says that she is now a would-be actress in (nearby) Paris and that, when she can't get acting work, she poses for porn photos. He accepts all these matters as part of her unique being.

After they are deeply involved with each other, Senta tells Philippe that they have reached the plane where each of them must kill someone to prove the sublimity of their love. This pseudo-Nietzschean formula, elevating them beyond good and evil, at first amuses him. But she is serious, and he is so fevered to please her that he pretends compliance. Next day a murder is committed down on the docks, and, using it as a convenience, he boasts to her that he did it. She believes him. She then feels that she must fulfill her obligation.

The screenplay, adapted by Pierre Leccia and Chabrol from a novel by Ruth Rendell, dramatizes intoxication by passion—how it can take lovers, particularly when one of them is already quite strange, into places that had been

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unimaginable. Chabrol surrounds this affair with the quite mundane troubles of Philippe's family, and these troubles have a double effect. They seem small compared with his consuming affair with Senta, and they also seem precious as fingerholds on normalcy. Chabrol also makes a character out of Senta's weird house itself, where the tango sometimes goes on above the darkening lovers.

Chabrol insured the power of this dangerously difficult film with perfect casting. The two lovers are so well acted that their story—and its finish—are incredibly convincing. Benoît Magimel, who was Isabelle Huppert's young lover in *The Piano Teacher*, gives heat to all the shades of feeling that come Philippe's way. Laura Smet, unbeautiful but sexy, creates a Senta who is driven by forces that she can't control and is glad of it. Charming Aurore Clément plays Philippe's mother, just good enough to be true. Matthieu Chabrol's score winds enticing filaments of sound through the film.

Chabrols, onward! Send us your next picture, please, along with word that you are making another. ■

JED PERL ON ART
Time in Venice

PAINTING STOPS TIME—AT least as we know time in our day-to-day lives. Within the delimited world of a painting, the forward flow of time is confounded, for even as the painter creates locations, intervals, and trajectories that hold our attention—that take our time—we nevertheless enter a realm in which we can move when and where we please, in which the amount of time we spend is for us to determine. In looking at paintings, we look quickly or slowly, we look at what we want to see when we want to see it, we enter into a time that is out of time. Even if the painter wants us to explore the canvas from left to right, and regards that exploration as suggesting a spatial progression that is also a temporal one, we are still free to regard left and right as existing simultaneously, and to explore not only from left to right but also from right to left—which might suggest going backward in time.

BELLINI, GIORGIONE, TITIAN AND THE RENAISSANCE OF VENETIAN PAINTING
(National Gallery of Art)

If painting is one of the bellwethers of modernity—and who can doubt that it is?—this is surely because the painter, in shattering the orderly flow of time, offers such a strong sense of open-ended discovery, of the canvas as a world in which we make our own way, and determine our own orientation, our own direction, our own sense of things. And this view of painting first crystallized as an idea and an ideal in Venice, in the years just after 1500. That extraordinary period is now the subject of **BELLINI, GIORGIONE, TITIAN AND THE RENAISSANCE OF VENETIAN PAINTING**, an exhibition at the National Gallery in Washington that travels to the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna in the fall. Among the canvases gathered in Washington are several of the time-out-of-time masterworks of Western art, including Giorgione's *Three Philosophers* and Titian's *Concert Champêtre (Pastoral Concert)* and *Bacchanal of the Andrians*.

It was in Venice, especially in the work of Giorgione and Titian, that artists first invited viewers to indulge in the freedom of looking. They explored many of the nearly endless ways in which it is possible to look and to see, to perceive and to reflect. And this new freedom found its essential emblem in the luminosity of oil paint, so full of the translucent subtleties that we linger over as we might linger over the shimmering depths in a forest pond. But the sensuous relationship between oil paint and the woven surface of the canvas is only the beginning of the layered experiences that Venetian painting offers, for these experiences have as much to do with the multiplication of narrative and representational and symbolic possibilities as with coloristic and textural ones.

In Venice artists began to realize that in looking at a painting there is time to indulge in a panoply of associations, so that a single element—a glass pitcher, for example—can be at once a wonder of naturalistic representation, a triumph of abstract color and brushwork, and an object with allegorical implications. The National Gallery show includes, as it happens, the two greatest pieces of glassware in all of Venetian painting, and perhaps in all of painting. They are both pitchers: the one from which a woman pours water in the *Concert Champêtre* and the one, half full of wine, that a man holds up to the sky in the *Bacchanal of the Andrians*. Situated nearly dead center in the *Bacchanal*, this pitcher of wine is a patch of painting that bewitches the eye and sets the mind spinning. The Andrian who holds it aloft, even as he is himself studying the clear glass and the translucent wine set against the bright sky, is inviting us to look at the glass, the wine, the sky—which is in turn an invitation to admire Titian's painterly brilliance. And the pitcher is also, simultaneously, the key to the story of the painting, which is about an island described by Philostratus where there is a river that flows with wine, with predictable effects on the carousing inhabitants. And the same pitcher is also a salute to Venice, where the art of making glass objects reached unrivaled heights.

So this one object emboldens us to take the freedom and the time to look in many different ways—at an object created in the workrooms of Venice, at an ancient myth, at transparency and translucency, at high color (the red wine) and no-color color (the clear glass). The rewards of looking at Titian's pitcher of wine have far less to do with a distillation of experience than with a density of experience; a pile-up of experiences. If you can imagine a cacophony that is also harmonious, this image is it. And the key to this paradoxical situation is the temporal element, the leisure we have to take in all these implications.

Certainly no other painting in the history of art has anything like the slow-building power of the *Concert Champêtre*, which contains that other pitcher, the one from which water is being poured. Here the pitcher is placed not dead center but off to the side, in the hand of a female figure who stands at the far left, facing out of the painting. The thematic or metaphorical centrality of the pitcher is therefore something that we discover in time, as we drift through this greenest of all landscapes, with its

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four beautiful young people. There is a man in elegant city clothes playing the lute, another man in country clothing leaning in and singing, and two nude women framing the two men, one woman seated with the men holding a flute, the other pouring water from that pitcher.

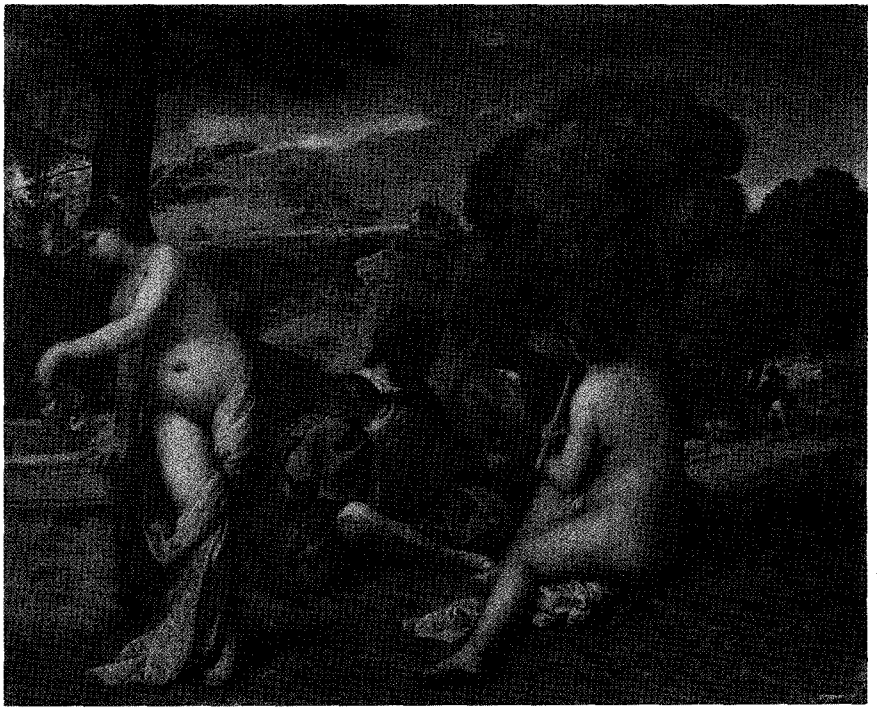
No painting is more celebrated for its multiplying mysteries. They begin with the pitcher. What, one wonders, is the woman doing pouring water into a well? This is a reversal of the orderly flow of things, a confounding of how things ought to happen. Iconographical interpretations of the *Concert Champêtre* look to various ancient and Renaissance pastoral poems, and it has been suggested that the women are in fact muses, spirits who do not really exist in the same time and space as the two young men, who simply do not see them. From our vantage point, the *Concert Champêtre*—with its shepherd and flock, its distant buildings, its grove of trees, its gentle hills, its music, its fabrics, its flesh—looks like an essence of all the pastoral visions of Western art, from the frescoes on the walls of the villas of Pompeii to the canvases of Watteau and Bonnard and Manet, whose *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* is a modern recapitulation of this composition. And both here and in the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* the pitcher—a shimmering vessel that can hold so many things, the purity of water, the inebriation of wine—becomes an emblem of oil painting itself, that shimmering substance that contains so much, inspires so much, provokes so much.

David Alan Brown, the curator at the National Gallery who organized this exhibition with Sylvia Ferino-Pagden of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, is surely sensitive to the central place that Venetian painting has in the Western tradition. In a catalog essay titled "Venetian Painting and the Invention of Art," he speaks of the "self-conscious artfulness" of Titian and Giorgione, of "a new kind of painting" that was seen "as a product of the artist's imagination," and of the relationship between this new work and "Renaissance notions of subjectivity and the self." And there are some extraordinary opportunities, all through the show, to see how this new self-consciousness is reflected in the work of Giovanni Bellini (who died in his eighties in 1516), of Giorgione (who was in his early thirties when he died of the plague in 1510), and of Titian (whose birth date remains unclear but who was probably in his late eighties at the time of his death in 1576).

But the show may leave many museumgoers somewhat uncertain as to how to follow the thread of this new artistic self-consciousness. This is far from being entirely the organizers' fault. When one is dealing with such extraordinarily rare and fragile works, the difficulties of securing all the right loans make the project well nigh impossible, although many of the loans that have been obtained are nothing short of miraculous. Indeed, the key works that we see here are so astonishing that we are left with the strange situation that paintings that are merely first-rate, which include many of the religious canvases of the 1510s, look somewhat pallid in comparison. Certainly the incandescence of Bellini's religious painting does not come through here, which robs visitors of one of the pinnacles of Venetian art; but most of Bellini's greatest altarpieces are in Venice and probably would not travel.

There is also a deeper problem with the show, which has to do with the difficulty of effectively plotting all the crosscurrents of early sixteenth-century painting. Even as a new hedonistic freedom was being born in some of the works on display, a freedom that we associate with modern painting, these Renaissance artists were still generally observing distinctions between sacred and profane subject matter, and distinctions between genres such as landscape and portrait, that contemporary viewers may perceive, not without reason, as placing social function before personal expression. The opening galleries of the exhibition, which focus on religious subjects, surely give us a sense of the central concerns of most of the paintings produced in early sixteenth-century Venice: religious subject matter remained dominant all through this period. Yet some of the most important paintings in those early galleries, such as Giorgione's *Adoration of the Shepherds* and Bellini's *St. Jerome Reading*, set religious themes in rural settings that begin to draw these paintings closer to the spirit of some of the secular works with landscape settings that appear later in the show. It is the personal cast that painters gave to landscapes and portraits, highlighted in the later galleries, that most fully suggests the gathering modernity of painting in early sixteenth-century Venice. To play with the emotional nuances of a landscape or a physiognomy, even if it is given a sacramental or theological meaning, is to place one's own intuitions at the center of the artistic endeavor.

Even so, I think that the organizers were right to avoid the temptation of



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Titian, *Concert Champêtre*, circa 1510

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hanging Giorgione's *Adoration of the Shepherds* next to the *Concert Champêtre*, or to place a lustrous *Virgin and Child* by Titian next to his dreamily erotic *Flora*. While these might have been exceedingly revealing juxtapositions, at least from a formal point of view, they run the risk of compromising the Renaissance feeling for the imperatives of subject matter. We must not exaggerate the extent to which even the gathering aestheticism of Venetian painting could erase the sharp divide between the sacred and the profane, though Titian's patrons surely recognized his talent as one that transcended subject matter. The hard fact is that in a museum exhibition, where the placement of works of art gives every theory or argument an air of overdetermination, it is exceedingly difficult to plumb all the subtleties of the revolution of Venetian painting, which was nothing less than a sea change in sensibility.

LIKE ALL SEA CHANGES IN SENsibility, this one had everything to do with a startlingly fresh interpretation of old verities, among them the immediate allure of color and texture and the fascination of the rural life. Bellini, very much the elder among the three artists who are at the core of the exhibition, saw in the opulence of Venice's ancient Byzantine traditions, in the glitter of gold mosaics and the meandering rhythms of decorative arabesques, the key to a new visual sensualism. In the frequently secular and deeply mysterious works of Giorgione, this sensualism, liberated from the restraints of traditional religious subjects, became daringly, sometimes almost anarchically, atmospheric. In his brief life, he staged a revolt against the narrative clarity of the Renaissance, a revolution in part inspired by Leonardo's mastery of misty chiaroscuro effects, a *sfumato* that Giorgione imbued with an unprecedented coloristic dazzle. It remained for Titian, who was scarcely twenty when Giorgione died in 1510, to transform the quietism that was at the core of Giorgione's sensualism—the perpetual mutability that always threatened to collapse into immutability—into a dramatically active spirit. Titian brought off this extraordinary feat by uniting Giorgione's colorism with the fierce graphic clarity that Raphael and Michelangelo had introduced into the art of their time.

At the National Gallery, works by this amazing triumvirate are joined with magnificent pieces by Lorenzo Lotto and Palma Vecchio and a number of other artists, and we are made conscious of the impact of some of the great artist-thinkers of the Renaissance, especially Dürer, a visitor to Venice in the early years of the sixteenth century. Yet the exhibition only really takes hold in a couple of rooms toward the middle of the show that are dominated by the *Concert Champêtre*, the *Bacchanal of the Andrians*, and other gently undulating pastoral vistas full of good-looking men and women. Here we discover a Renaissance deeply colored by the experience of Byzantium and the Silk Route. The Venetians had a far more immediate feeling than the Florentines for the Easternness of the classical past, for the sensualism of the pagan world.

All of us who have seen Venetian painting in Venice itself, in the churches and in the galleries of the Accademia, have been struck by the extent to which the painters of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Venice took the city itself as their subject. In the work of Carpaccio and Giovanni Bellini and his brother Gentile Bellini, we see the ancient mosaicked interiors, the canals and the palaces with their richly articulated façades, the elegantly dressed inhabitants, and the great processions in the Piazza San Marco. Not much of this urban side of Venetian painting is present in the National Gallery show. What do come through very strongly, however, are the pastoral yearnings of this supremely urban civilization—the fascination with the world beyond the city, a world that was associated with Renaissance and classical poetry and what was known of ancient painting.

It is in the galleries that focus on the pastoral that the elasticity of the sense of time in Venetian painting is most palpably present, for the pastoral was an ancient theme that lent an allegorical weight to painting's newfound possibilities. Although the pastoral, strictly speaking, concerns the lives of shepherds, the pastoral mode was eventually seen as absorbing a whole range of reflections on man's relationship with nature, and in this broad sense pastoral experience is represented at the National Gallery by an unprecedented gathering of masterworks from five great museums in five different countries. Bellini's *Feast of the Gods*, completed by Titian, is one of the treasures of the National Gallery, and it is joined here with another painting that was commissioned for the palace of Alfonso d'Este in Ferrara, Titian's *Bacchanal of the Andrians*, now in the Prado. Giorgione's *Three Philosophers* has traveled from the Kunsthistorisches Museum; Giorgione's *Sunset Landscape* has come from the National Gallery in London; and the *Concert Champêtre* arrived from the Louvre.

NO PAINTING MORE COMPLETEly defines the pastoral atmosphere, with its time-out-of-time mingling of fluidity and immobility, than the *Concert Champêtre*. It is a picture about which you always feel more than you understand. Indeed, the problem of understanding begins with the question of authorship. Although the *Concert* is now generally ascribed to Titian, throughout much of the nineteenth century it was credited to Giorgione, and in more recent years it was said to have been begun by Giorgione and completed by Titian—and there remains a significant body of opinion that holds that it is by Giorgione. For those who favor Giorgione (and they include, interestingly enough, the art historian Jaynie Anderson, who wrote the entry on the painting in the National Gallery catalogue), the canvas's magic resides in the meandering lyricism of its composition. This is a painting in which the four central figures

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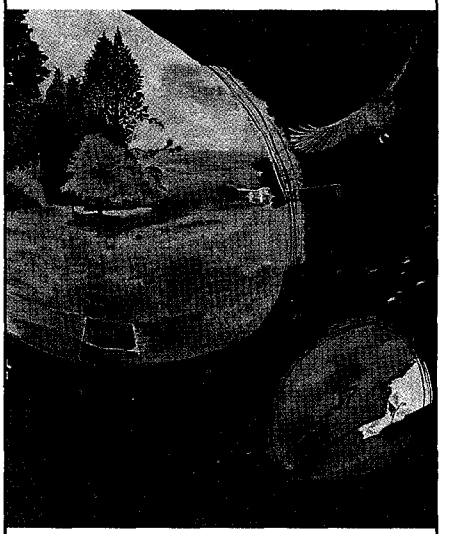

Birds Crossing Burgundy and Green, 84 x 72 inches, acrylic on unstretched canvas

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and the various landscape elements—a grove of trees, a group of sheep, a distant building, a curving hill—are arrayed so unpredictably, so intuitively, that the whole picture suggests a perpetual flux. The bewitching orchestrations of lights and darks and the deep, plangent colors spell instability, liquidity, volubility.

Titian, by comparison, gives the dancing rhythms and erotic interweavings of the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* a stable foundation. His figures have a freestanding, sculptural density. The entire composition is lucid, architectonic. These are qualities that are utterly irreconcilable with the spirit of the *Concert Champêtre*, or with works securely given to Giorgione, such as the *Tempesta* and the *Sunset Landscape*. I will not be surprised if the opportunity at the National Gallery to see the *Concert Champêtre* side by side with the *Three Philosophers*, one of the small group of works unequivocally ascribed to Giorgione, leads some people to rethink the attribution. The two paintings share an ambling rhythm, a flow of color and chiaroscuro across forms and through forms, a merging of near and far into a single fabric—what David Rosand, in an essay titled "Giorgione, Venice, and the Pastoral Vision," described as "the slow fusing of body and space at the disappearing contours," as a spirit of "veiled invitation."

Whether the *Concert Champêtre* is by Giorgione or Titian will probably never be definitively determined. Whatever its authorship, this astonishing canvas takes us to the central miracle of Venetian painting—to a density of pictorial experience that is sustained without ever quite locking the painting into a definitive shape. The *Concert Champêtre*, while never incoherent, does not insist on its coherence, but rather urges us to discover coherence as an unfolding of experiences. It is a never-ending approach. Here, amid colors of a perfect sonorous richness, composition is not a fixed arrangement, but an interweaving of possibilities. The woman at the well, to take but one example, is so solitary a figure that she might be regarded as being in another painting entirely, and yet her powerful vertical form is an essential counterweight to nearly everything else in the composition. Even a secondary element, such as the little clutch of buildings above the two men's heads, can be seen either as a grace note beautifully irrelevant to the figures in the foreground or as the climax of a triangle that enfolds those two men and the woman who is sitting with them. There is no either/or in the world of *Concert Champêtre*; there is only an enigmatic plenitude of both/and—a juggling act in which everything is always held aloft.

In the works that are securely attributed to Giorgione, composition is dynamic rather than architectonic, an unfurling rather than a building of forms. In the *Three Philosophers*—who surely represent the three ages of man, and whose philosophic implications have been interpreted in any number of ways—one is invited to linger on the parts, to study a dark cave, a light-filled landscape, the old man enfolded in greenery, the young man's profile against bare tree trunks; and although these elements also make a unity, they are not exactly locked together in that unity. As for Giorgione's *Sunset Landscape*, it is almost a definition of the spirit of indeterminacy in painting, with its dramatic sky, grove of trees, rocky heights, and distant hills, all dotted with human activity—an older man nursing a younger one, Saint George slaying the dragon, Saint Anthony as a hermit—and a clutch of fantastical animals that suggest Hieronymus Bosch. In all of Giorgione's paintings, the meandering, digressive compositional techniques and the concomitant iconographical ambiguities invite us to take our time in looking, to see the paintings as essentially open-ended, a space full of reverberations that spark reflections.

We know that the sixteenth-century Venetians were not necessarily concerned that a painting have an absolutely clear meaning, because when Vasari was visiting Venice in search of material for *Lives of the Artists*, he was astonished to find that nobody could give him a satisfactory account of a famous cycle of frescoes by Giorgione. His impression was that the Venetians did not care what the meaning of the paintings might be, so long as they were beautiful. I would not go so far as to argue that the Venetians were indifferent to themes, but they were certainly sympathetic to the artist who allowed themes to unfold in unpredictable ways, creating a variety of intermingled meanings. Bellini's *Lady with a Mirror*, one of the jewels in this exhibition, suggests how this multiplication of meanings can be created even within a relatively restricted format. While the woman's beauty is the essential subject of this work, painted when Bellini was already in his eighties, we are also encouraged to contemplate other varieties of beauty—in the rendering of mirrors and textiles, in the landscape beyond the window, in the still life on the windowsill; and although all these elements may add up iconographically, they are also permitted their discrete power. They spell a variety of pleasures in which we are invited to indulge.

One of the most famous of Giorgione's themes is the man in armor or the man holding a piece of armor. And here again I think we are invited to consider a range of symbolic and metaphoric implications that overlap but do not necessarily cohere. In the case of Giorgione's *Portrait of Francesco Maria I Della Rovere* (which is not in the National Gallery show), the ornamentation on the helmet identifies the young man's august family, and of course armor evokes a whole range of martial experiences. Yet if armor is associated with the man of action and man's violent nature, Giorgione also uses the shimmering coldness of metal surfaces to set off the delicacy of some of his male physiognomies. And sometimes one feels that what interests Giorgione about armor is nothing but the pictorial challenge of painting these sleek, reflective surfaces. In his portraits of men in armor, all these meanings and implications circulate together.

The Venetian painters are always inviting us to regard the world from various vantage points. Titian is justly celebrated as one of the greatest of all students of female beauty, and when we look at the sleeping nymph in the *Bacchanal of the Andrians* we may conclude that nobody knew better than Titian what men want. But the *Bacchanal*—and other paintings of Titian's, such as the *Three Ages of Man*—show a grasp of male beauty quite as ripe and acute as his feeling for female beauty. The more one looks at Titian's paintings, the more one may be moved to conclude that, like some of the great novelists, he could see all sides of human desire. Titian's young women and young men are not figures derived from one model of beauty; they are complementary types, sensuous in different ways. Just as the range of full-strength colors in the *Bacchanal*, the lustrous reds and greens and blues, each insists on its own value, so maleness and femaleness, and each male and female figure, has its distinctive power, its own bacchic character. As Erwin Panofsky pointed out in a chapter titled "Reflec-

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tions on Time" in his book on Titian, the *Bacchanal* is also in its own way a painting about the stages of life: the central group of revelers, all in the prime of life, are framed by a little boy, who can do nothing but pee, and the old man on the hill, who can do nothing but sleep. The unity of the painting is a unity freely established, a unity that ranges widely and even accepts the necessity for disunity.

In the sixteenth century, Italian painting was understood as containing two great traditions, which came to be identified with *disegno* and *colore. Disegno* was the art that had been perfected in Florence, an art concentrated on the graphic impulse, on the clarity of composition. *Colore*, the art of Venice and the subject of the National Gallery exhibition, was more sensuous in nature. But if that sensuousness was grounded in the Venetian mastery of oil paint, it also suggested more generally an improvisational spirit, a decentering compositional rhythm, a fascination with themes and motifs that are as hard to pin down as the images of water and music that were so essential an element in the worldview of Giorgione, who is reputed to have been as gifted a musician as he was a painter.

The Venetian tradition has been a touchstone for artists from Rubens, Rembrandt, and Velázquez to Watteau, Delacroix, and Matisse. It is one of the foundations, if not *the* foundation, of the art of painting as we know it. And when we ask what drew all these artists to Venice, we often find ourselves turning back to Walter Pater's essay "The School of Giorgione," from 1877, which remains the essential modern text for the understanding of the Venetian heritage. Pater argues that the art of Venice is "always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material." While the two paintings that Pater focuses on, the *Concert Champêtre* and a study of three men known as the *Concert*, from the Pitti Palace, are now generally credited to Titian, the power of Pater's essay remains undiminished. When he speaks of the "perfect identification of matter and form," he is making a powerful case for the essential spirit of the painting of early sixteenth-century Venice, especially paintings of a secular nature: the scenes of people playing music or passing time in rural settings.

Among "no school of painters," Pater contends, "have the necessary limitations of the art of painting been so unerringly though instinctively apprehended, and the essence of what is pictorial in a picture so justly conceived." Here we are confronted with one of the clarion calls of what we have come to think of as formalism. In this sense Pater leads straight to the writings of Clive Bell and Roger Fry and, later yet, Clement Greenberg. When Pater speaks of a painting that is "like some consummate extract or quintessence of life," he is speaking of a painting that passes beyond genre or subject, that is completely, totally, immediately itself.

If Titian has come in our century to be regarded as the greatest of all painters, a place once held by Raphael, it is because the graphic and narrative lucidity for which Raphael was justly celebrated is now seen as somehow irreconcilable with the essentially sensuous nature of painting. Pater's essay was a landmark in this geological shift in artistic taste. If Pater's talk of the "perfect identification of matter and form" seems to overlook some of the essential life-giving tensions in Venetian painting, we must recognize that he was writing out of a need to combat the Victorian tendency to experience all painting in terms of literature and narrative. The pervasiveness of that attitude is difficult for us to quite imagine now, after a century and more when Pater and Bell and Fry and Greenberg and many others fought for the authority of "pure perception."

But reading Pater's essay again, after spending time with the *Concert Champêtre* and the *Bacchanal of the Andrians*, my feeling is that he makes Venetian painting a little less interesting than it really is. What characterizes these works, I think, is not the "perfect identification of matter and form," but a constant vibration or simultaneous existence of matter and form—a variety of possibilities knit together, but loosely. Standing before these paintings, what amazes me is the extent to which the face-off between form and content is obliterated—not because they have become one, but because the artist has created a realm in which there is time to experience both form and content. I think it is the sympathy that the Venetians had for a multiplicity of meanings and possibilities and implications that draws artists and art historians to them today. From our vantage point, Gior-

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But who holds the key?

NPR commentator Juan Williams has had

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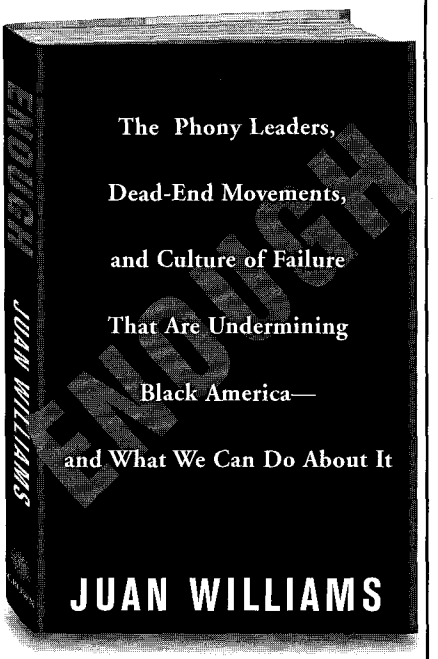

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gione and Titian reflect the paradoxes of formalism every bit as much as they demonstrate the powers of formalism. They understand the force of color in and of itself, but they understand the allure of narratives and metaphors and symbols as well—and they allow all these things to exist together, in an unruly and sometimes reckless harmony.

Even as the theorists of the Florentine Renaissance were arguing that a painting, with its clearly set borders, defined a single moment in time and space, the Venetians were beginning to suggest almost the reverse: namely, that the painter established an indefinite space, a space beyond the reaches of clock time, a space where colors could melt and fuse and shift and burst, where images could mean many different things, where all composition was provisional, improvisational. This Venetian vision was inscribed in the canvases of Giorgione and Titian. It is an aesthetic that grew up beyond the reach of aesthetic theory and that amounts to nothing less than painting's declaration of independence. ■

Michael Grunwald

Progmation

Why Hurricane Katrina was a man-made disaster.

I.

IN 1980, THE ARMY CORPS OF Engineers had a problem in New Orleans, the kind of problem that America's water resources agency encounters all the time. Its friends in Louisiana's congressional delegation wanted the Corps to build a massive new lock on the Industrial Canal, a shipping shortcut to the Port of New Orleans, and so did its friends at the port. The Corps was eager to oblige them; it is, at heart, a public works brigade, run by engineers trained to move dirt and pour concrete. Its motto is *essayons*, "let us try."

And so it tried. The problem was that its numbers were not adding up. Before the Corps can build a project, it must certify to Congress that the economic benefits to anyone—in this case, the port and a few well-connected shipping firms—would exceed the cost to taxpayers. But even the agency's reliably optimistic economic models failed to nudge the lock's benefit-cost ratio above 0.5; the predicted private benefits, in other words, were less than half the expected public cost. So on June 18 the men of *essayons* convened a high-level meeting to work the problem. "No one feels that additional study could ever justify higher than a 0.5 [ratio]," said the top Corps planner from New Orleans, according to a transcript. "Is this correct?" "That is generally correct," replied the top Corps economist from New Orleans. "Benefits are less than 0.5 to 1," agreed the top economist from St. Louis. Staff economists Larry Prather and Don Sweeney were even more dubious of the lock. "There's no way you can economically justify that," Prather said. "The data we have will not support that," Sweeney added.

Colonel Tom Sands, the Corps commander in New Orleans, was not looking forward to telling Louisiana's power brokers the bad news. But the chief of planning for the entire Corps reminded him that when it came to evaluating projects, economy was not necessarily destiny. "There are two things to consider," he said. "1. There are regulations we must follow. 2. You can recommend a plan based on political progmation. The choice is the regular decision process or the political decision process." The planner probably meant "pragmatism," but Sands, who later retired from the Corps as a major general, had enough progmation to get the point. "Let's throw in the political considerations," he announced. And a $750 million boondoggle was born.

It has survived to this day, despite local opposition, environmental lawsuits, federal deficits, and a persistent lack of cargo on the canal. The Corps justified the lock by predicting spectacular increases in traffic—even though traffic had been plummeting for years, a fact omitted from the Corps study—but traffic has kept dropping. Still, thanks to port lobbyists such as former House Appropriations Chairman Robert Livingston, Congress and the Corps agreed in 2000 to waive most of the port's $100 million cost-share, so American taxpayers will foot almost the entire bill. "As you know, this agreement with the Corps is the result of Herculean efforts by the Louisiana delegation," another port lobbyist wrote

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Michael Grunwald, a WASHINGTON POST *reporter, is the author of* THE SWAMP: THE EVERGLADES, FLORIDA, AND THE POLITICS OF PARADISE *(Simon and Schuster).*

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in an internal memo. The memo singled out congressional advocates such as Republican David Vitter, who received $40,000 from the project's beneficiaries in that campaign cycle, and Democrat-turned-Republican Billy Tauzin, who was about to take over the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, and Democrat William Jefferson, who pushed the project even though most of his constituents in the African American neighborhood abutting the canal opposed it.

Vitter is now a U.S. senator; Tauzin is the drug industry's chief lobbyist; Jefferson is the FBI target whose $90,000 freezer gave new meaning to the phrase "cold cash." And for the Corps, the "regular decision process" is now the "political decision process." Sweeney exposed that process in 2000 when he blew the whistle on another study that his bosses had skewed to justify an even more expensive lock project—as part of a secret "Program Growth Initiative" designed to boost the Corps budget by rubber-stamping pork. Prather joined that process as he rose up the Corps ranks to become the agency's top lobbyist, but he revealed his disgust in private e-mails he had to disclose during a lawsuit, which described his agency's politically inspired projects as "swine" and "economic duds with huge environmental consequences." "We have no strategy for saving ourselves," Prather wrote. "Someone needs to be supervising the Corps."

On Monday, August 29, 2005, New Orleans paid the price for the Corps's dysfunction, when Hurricane Katrina toppled the floodwalls that were supposed to protect the city, including those along the Industrial Canal. Katrina turned a vibrant city into an Atlantis, Michael Brown into a laughingstock, and Kanye West into a social critic. Its name became synonymous with bad government.

Unfortunately, America has concluded that what went wrong in Katrina was the government's response to the disaster, not the government's contribution to the disaster. The Corps has eluded the public's outrage—even though its commander finally admitted in April that his agency's "design failures" inundated New Orleans. America is now well versed in the deterioration of FEMA, but it hasn't noticed that in the years before Katrina, investigations by the Pentagon, the Government Accountability Office, and the National Academy of Sciences had all documented the Corps's follies.

In fact, in the year since Katrina, Congress has given the Corps even more money and power. The Corps is a congressional plaything; its budget consists almost entirely of "earmarks," individual pet projects requested by individual congressmen. The recent corruption scandals on Capitol Hill have prompted constant demands for "earmark reform," but little recognition that the Corps is the ultimate earmark agency. The failures of the Corps are also failures of Congress.

The Industrial Canal project may seem irrelevant to those failures, since the $750 million lock had nothing to do with the flood-control system that collapsed—but that is precisely why it stands as a perfect symbol of Katrina. The drowning of New Orleans was a tragedy of priorities, and protecting this low-lying soup-bowl of a city was no one's priority. The Corps spent more in Louisiana than in any other state, but it wasted most of the money on ecologically harmful and fiscally wasteful pork that kept its employees busy and its political patrons happy, while neglecting hurricane protection for New Orleans. One of its pork projects, the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, actually intensified Katrina's surge.

The devastation of Katrina, in other words, was a direct result of America's water resources policy, which is not a policy at all, but an annual scramble for appropriations. Louisiana's congressional delegation always fared exceptionally well in that scramble, but it never cared as much about averting a theoretical disaster as it cared about bringing home actual bacon. And the Corps cared about whatever Congress cared about. "Generally speaking, there was less than moderate interest in hurricane protection," Sands told me.

Sands, incidentally, is now a consultant for Louisiana ports.

II.

Katrina was a Murphy's Law fiasco; the screw-ups kept on coming. Mayor Ray Nagin was slow to declare a mandatory evacuation. His buses evacuated residents to the Superdome instead of outside the city. Many of his police officers went AWOL after the storm hit, and some seized the opportunity to relieve Wal-Marts of their merchandise. The floodwalls failed that morning, but poor communications left officials thinking New Orleans had dodged the bullet until Tuesday. FEMA was unprepared for the scope of the disaster, so survivors waited in vain for food, ice, and buses, and corpses rotted in the heat. Brown dithered while New Orleans drowned, pestering his aides about his wardrobe. The Superdome and the convention center became squalid hellholes. Nagin's police chief made matters worse by passing along myths about babies raped in the dome, and Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff publicly admitted he had no idea what was going on at the convention center. Bush seemed clueless, jetting to a fund-raiser, speechifying about immigration reform, continuing his vacation until several days into the crisis. And then his response was tone-deaf: his Air Force One photo-op 30,000 feet above New Orleans, his insistence that no one had anticipated a breach of the levees, and finally the immortal words, "Brownie, you're doing a heckuva job."

The chaos on the ground prompted a frenzy of recriminations. Nagin spewed venom at the feds. White House leakers slagged Democratic Governor Katherine Blanco. Blanco's team shot back at Bush, but also at Nagin, a fellow Democrat who had endorsed her Republican opponent. Bush eventually fired Brown, who first pointed fingers at Nagin and Blanco, and then at his bureaucratic rival Chertoff. The Corps was barely mentioned, except when some of the agency's defenders had the chutzpah to attack Bush for underfunding it. As if the problem with the rathole was insufficient cheese.

For all the complexities of the catastrophe, two basic things went wrong during Katrina. The levees broke, and the response was slow. But while both of those failures were government failures, the first was much more important. If the levees had not breached, the New Orleans bowl would not have filled, and no one would have cared about Brownie's job experience with Arabian horses. FEMA's incompetent response to Katrina did reveal the federal government's lack of preparation for a potential terrorist attack, and the disarray at the Department of Homeland Security; but it was not what killed 1,000 people and inflicted $100 billion in damage. And while it is legitimate to blame Bush for the problems at FEMA and DHS, most of his administration's proposed budget cuts for the Corps were uncharacteristically responsible efforts to block wasteful spending—which is why Congress routinely ignored them.

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A SLEW OF BOOKS NOW AIM TO tell the story of Katrina, and it is not surprising that they focus more on what happened after New Orleans ended up underwater than on how New Orleans ended up underwater. The levees failed in a matter of moments when no one was watching, while the response failed over the course of an agonizing week when the world was watching. Katrina's aftermath produced dramatic stories of narrow escapes and tragic deaths, heroism and ineptitude, mass devastation and mass migration. But the most important thing to remember about Katrina is that it was not a very powerful storm when it hit New Orleans—no stronger than a Category Two, and maybe only a Category One—so those stories were all made possible by the failures of the Corps.

Katrina was *not* the Big One. To their credit, almost all the post-Katrina authors seem to recognize this, even if they do not dwell on it. Jed Horne, an editor at the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, came up with the perfect title for his lucid and wrenching chronicle of the storm: *Breach of Faith*. Ivor van Heerden makes the same point in oversized type on the back cover of his memoir *The Storm*: "Properly designed and constructed levees would have protected the city. Instead, they collapsed." Even the graphomaniacal historian-to-the-stars Douglas Brinkley, who is passing off a 700-page Nexis search as a book called *The Great Deluge*, notes that "the shoddy Army Corps engineering crippled the Greater New Orleans flood-control system." He does not say much more about the Corps, although he does say very nice things about Oprah Winfrey, Brian Williams, Bill O'Reilly, and other people who have the power to affect the fortunes of his book. Brinkley brags that he taught three college courses during the six months he took to churn out his tome. No wonder he didn't have time to think.

The most engaging of the Katrina books is *1 dead in attic*, a collection of Chris Rose's columns in the *Times-Picayune*, packed with more heart, honesty, and wit than a thousand Douglas Brinkley media appearances. Rose was more interested in telling the searing stories of his shattered city than assigning the blame for its demise, but he did point his finger in the right direction in "Refrigerator Town," his paean to his city's appliance-littered landscape:

> From Refrigerator Pulpits, the
> preachers said the culprits
> For the storm were all the lesbians
> and queers.
> But Refrigerator Church was left
> in quite a lurch
> When it turned out to be the
> Corps of Engineers.

No one understands this better than *Times-Picayune* reporters John McQuaid and Mark Schleifstein, who have not only written an insightful book about Katrina, *Path of Destruction*, but also predicted the disaster in 2002 in a remarkable series of articles that saved lives, and would have saved more if it had been properly appreciated. McQuaid and Schleifstein can honestly say they told us so. *Path of Destruction* is a bit difficult to follow, but it has serious reporting and—more than any of the other Katrina books rushed to press—serious thinking. It is crammed with valuable context—on the settlement and development of New Orleans, on its hurricane history, on the decline of FEMA, and, yes, on the Corps and its levees.

The only Katrina chronicle with nothing on the Corps is *Dispatches From the Edge* by CNN's Anderson Cooper, who chose to focus more on CNN's Anderson Cooper. This Ken-doll anchorman has his own show, which may explain why Brinkley made sure to praise his eloquence, and why his tell-a-lot-but-not-all memoir—no, he doesn't address the questions that swirled around the actual Ken doll—soared to the top of the best-seller list. Cooper deserves praise for jetting around the world to tell depressing stories, but most of the lessons he draws from those stories involve his own extremely fascinating pain. His book is the story of a poor little rich boy—he is Gloria Vanderbilt's kid—who realizes after covering Katrina that he is drawn to tragedy because deep down he feels sad and bad about his father's death, and also about his brother's suicide. Katrina, too, makes him feel sad and bad—and also mad! The catastrophe put Cooper in touch with parts of himself he never knew existed. He now feels so deeply that he was able to appear on the cover of *Vanity Fair* accessorized with tears in his eyes. He is such an accomplished feeler that he can tell how other people feel without even talking to them:

> Just as we come back from a commercial break, a pickup truck drives by. In the back a young man with a trucker hat holds up a tattered American flag. He salvaged it from the wreckage. He's tired and worn, but proud of that flag, proud that he and his family are still standing. We don't speak—he is too far away—but I look him in the eye and we nod to each other. In his face I think I detect betrayal and anger, but also strength and resolve. I'm on the air, but I find myself tearing up. My throat tightens; I'm almost unable to speak.

The story of how the Army Corps of Engineers drowned New Orleans does not pack the kind of emotional power that leaves telepathic TV personalities almost speechless. It is a story that takes place mostly in the fine print of technical studies and appropriation bills, long before the rooftop rescues. But it's still a story that should tighten your throat.

III.

NEW ORLEANS WAS FOUNDED by French pioneers in 1718 on a "natural levee" overlooking the Mississippi, a crescent of high ground formed by the river's overflowing silt. That is why it is known as the Crescent City, and why its historic French Quarter remained relatively dry during Katrina. But New Orleans was always vulnerable to the whims of Mother Nature: its early settlers immediately built a three-foot-tall levee to protect against the frequent mutinies of the Mississippi. They did not build levees against the Gulf—perhaps because they were buffered by hundreds of square miles of coastal swamps and marshes that served as hurricane speed bumps, perhaps because hurricanes were less of a presence in their lives. Still, it must be acknowledged that New Orleans was in harm's way long before the Corps came along.

All natural disasters are man-made disasters. They would be mere natural events if people would not get in the way. Floodplains tend to flood, and powerful hurricanes tend to wipe out the coastal communities in their paths. For this reason, Katrina practically obliterated the Mississippi coast after making landfall as a Category Four storm. But the devastation in Mississippi, while awful, was not exceptional (which is why Brinkley, who must be paid by the word, is the only author to devote much attention to it). What made Katrina so unusual was the

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collapse of the New Orleans levees.

But the levees were not really in Katrina's path, and their collapse was not the result of geography. Their failure was the result of the Corps. As Susan Glasser and I tried to explain last fall in *The Washington Post*, the Corps did not just create that result through engineering mistakes, which were only the assassination-of-the-archduke in the larger story of this disaster. In fact, the Corps betrayed New Orleans in five different ways.

THE CORPS GOT ITS START AS a tiny engineering regiment during the Revolutionary War, building fortifications at Bunker Hill. It still performs military engineering work for the Army, including the reconstruction of Iraq; this side of the Corps, despite its Halliburton connections, is no more or less controversial than any other military unit. But over the last two centuries, the Corps has gradually expanded into America's dominant civil engineering force, run by a small cadre of military officers but staffed by more than thirty thousand civilians, supposedly overseen by an assistant Army secretary but really reporting to congressional overseers. It used to build bridges and hospitals, as well as the Washington Monument and the Library of Congress, but today the heart of its civil mission involves water.

The Corps's water projects were not always controversial. In 1839, a captain named Henry Shreve broke up an ancient logjam on Louisiana's Red River with a snagboat he invented himself, clearing a path to a new inland port; the locals were so grateful they named it Shreveport. The Corps eventually developed much of America's water transportation network, dredging harbors for ships, manhandling unruly rivers into reliable ribbons of commerce, providing the shock troops in the nation's war on nature. Water resources were considered useless in their natural form, so Congress assigned the Corps to "improve" them into useful engines of economic development. For most of American history, that was the very definition of conservation, the "wise use" of natural resources.

Flood control was still seen as a local responsibility, but after the Civil War an egomaniacal Corps commander named Andrew Humphreys, who had lost a thousand men in fifteen minutes during a charge at Fredericksburg, coordinated a similarly disastrous assault on the Mississippi River, bullying local officials into adopting his "levees-only" policy. As levees began rising on both sides of the river—each town had an obvious incentive to build higher than the one opposite—the constricted Mississippi lashed out with increasing force, blasting crevasses through weak spots in the dikes. As John McPhee has noted, the Corps proclaimed that the river was under control "before the great floods of 1884, 1890, 1891, 1897, 1898 and 1903, and ... again before 1912, 1913, 1922 and 1927."

That last one was the big one, leaving almost one million people homeless and ending the reign of New Orleans as the financial capital of the South. The flood threatened to end New Orleans altogether, but the city's bankers persuaded the Corps to dynamite a levee upstream, so two poorer parishes were wiped out instead. The Corps and its "levees-only" policy had created a catastrophic mess. Naturally, Congress assigned the agency full responsibility for controlling the river's floods, and dramatically increased its budget. It would not be the last time the Corps failed upward.

THE CORPS DEVISED A NEW plan to control the Mississippi, featuring spillways and reservoirs as well as levees high enough to contain biblical floods. When members of Congress asked Corps commander Edgar Jadwin—another general in the Humphreys mold—whether he expected them to endorse it simply because the Corps had submitted it, he replied: "Yes." The result was the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project (MR&T), the most ambitious and expensive federal initiative of its day. And in a departure from the usual local cost-sharing rules, American taxpayers would pay the entire price.

The project kept the Mississippi and its tributaries away from middle America's floodplains, promoting development in cities such as St. Louis, Memphis, and New Orleans. Even during Katrina, New Orleans faced no danger from the river that had harassed its original settlers. But as with most human efforts to control nature, there were unintended consequences. The caged and armored Mississippi no longer carried as much silt from its banks and its floodplain down to its delta, so it no longer created as many of the coastal wetlands that helped to absorb storm surges from the Gulf. As the Corps choked off the river's natural land-building process, marshes began disintegrating into open water at a rate of twenty-five square miles per year. Meanwhile New Orleans began to sink, as the tremendous infusions of silt that had shored up the city's foundations no longer arrived to serve as natural fill. Overall, scientists believe the land losses raised Katrina's surge by several feet. That is the first way the Corps war on nature set the stage for last year's disaster.

The MR&T kicked off a Corps construction boom, as the agency's can-do engineers embraced the spirit of the New Deal. After a flood in Omaha, one commander shouted: "I want control of the Missouri River!" Soon he had it, thanks to a series of dams and dikes. After several floods in South Florida, the Corps built the most elaborate water-control project of its day, transforming the region from backwater to megalopolis with two thousand miles of levees and canals. Water projects became a form of currency on Capitol Hill, a conduit for congressmen to steer jobs and other goodies to constituents and contributors. And the Corps gained influential allies in the shipping, dredging, farming, and building industries, the "customers" who reaped the benefits of its work.

That work often had disastrous environmental effects; the taming of the Missouri drove the 150-million-year-old pallid sturgeon to the brink of extinction, while the Corps work in South Florida ravaged the Everglades. And presidents from both parties tried in vain to rein in the pork-peddling of the Corps. FDR's interior secretary, Harold Ickes, decried its "reckless and wastrel behavior," attributing its popularity on Capitol Hill to "the torporific effect of the pork barrel." President Eisenhower declared that "I cannot overstate my opposition to this kind of waste of public funds."

But nobody ever claimed that it was a Corps of Biologists. And there was not

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much that the executive branch could do to thwart congressional pork. One example was the $62 million Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, a seventy-six-mile navigation shortcut to the Port of New Orleans. According to a Corps history, "the costs were shown to be high and the benefits ... speculative." Opponents denounced it as a storm-surge shotgun pointed at New Orleans, a hydrological Trojan horse that would transport the Gulf into the city. But under pressure from its friends in the port and Congress, the Corps concluded the outlet was justified. In 1965, the outlet helped Hurricane Betsy ravage St. Bernard Parish, exactly as the critics had warned.

The outlet went on to destroy more than twenty thousand acres of surrounding marshlands, and never attracted much freight. But the Corps continued to spend $13 million a year dredging it. And in 2004, a Corps study predictably concluded that it should remain open, a study so shoddy the Bush administration ordered the Corps to redo it. But Katrina arrived first. And Louisiana State University researchers believe the outlet amplified its surge by as much as 40 percent. That is the second way the Corps did in New Orleans.

IN THE 1950S, AFTER A SERIES OF powerful storms, Congress directed the Corps to start studying hurricane protections around the country. But nothing came of the New Orleans study until Betsy became the first storm to cause $1 billion in damages. Senate Finance Chairman Russell B. Long of Louisiana called President Johnson and urged him to have a look at the wreckage, and when Johnson offered to send his best man, Long shot back: "We are not the least bit interested in your best man." So Johnson got on a plane, and six weeks later—thanks to Louisiana congressional *machers*—Congress authorized a project to protect New Orleans from the Gulf. But there were two serious problems with the project, and they turned out to be the third and the fourth ways Congress and the Corps shafted New Orleans: it was not built in the right place, and it was not built to withstand a storm as fierce as Billion-Dollar Betsy.

One might think that an agency assigned to protect New Orleans from a hurricane would set out to build the best possible protection for its residents. Not so. Congress required the Corps to come up with the plan with the highest economic benefits compared to costs—regardless of who got those benefits, or the cost of destroying wetlands, or even the cost of human lives. And when the Corps ran the numbers in 1965, it concluded that the best way to produce economic benefits would be to build levees around low-lying wetlands on the city's outskirts, which would "hasten urbanization and industrialization" in unpopulated areas, which would make some landowners and developers rich.

At one hearing in 1978, back when Robert Livingston was an idealistic freshman congressman, he ripped a Corps colonel for protecting swamps instead of people. "It would seem to me that if hurricane protection to the people and properties is the paramount importance, the portion you would want to complete first would be those levees surrounding inhabited areas rather than those around uninhabited areas," he said. "Would that not be a priority, sir?" It would not. Only 21 percent of the land the Corps project aimed to protect was already developed. The rest was soggy. The Corps would make it dry, encouraging the development of thousands of homes in a vulnerable floodplain. Katrina would put it all back underwater.

Still, it is doubtful that the swamps-versus-people problem was entirely a result of the outrageous rules directing the Corps to ignore human lives. As the Industrial Canal lock shows, political progmation usually matters more than rules when it comes to Corps studies. In recent years, the Corps has been repeatedly caught manipulating its studies to justify waterworks for its "customers," from the lock on the Mississippi River that was exposed by Don Sweeney to a deepening of the Delaware River that was savaged by the GAO. Even before the Program Growth Initiative instructed Corps study managers to "get creative" in order to endorse popular projects, Corps studies were renowned for justifying the unjustifiable: the Corps greenlighted the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway by estimating costs of $300 million and initial freight traffic of 28 million tons; the actual totals were $2 billion and 1.4 million tons. So while it is possible that the Corps protected swamps instead of people out of a legalistic sense of duty, it probably didn't hurt that President Johnson's family had investments in some of those wetlands outside New Orleans. The Corps has never figured out that its real customers are the people affected by its projects, and the taxpayers who finance them.

ONE MIGHT ALSO THINK THAT the agency assigned to protect New Orleans from hurricanes would plan for a worst-case scenario. Again, not so. The Corps was only authorized to plan for a "Standard Project Hurricane," a two-hundred-year storm. (By contrast, the Mississippi River levees are designed for an eight-

Machine Visions

My body a fast jade branch
in the riverbed. In the underground
the ants' plum-black kingdom,
constructing. Headwaters: thoughts
resurrecting in vapors, in waves.
Alphabet of sandhill cranes, snail
alphabet, gut alphabet. My body
a tendril of corn in the field's teeth.
All growing things, all things
of before tasted in them. The ants
ascending my door—evening's
half-formed face. The trees swift
as wings, green as thoughtlessness.
The dogs black through rain, the dogs
brown in sun. Mountain island:
a phrase to confuse the self outright.
The worm feels the night with
the whole of its body, ascends.
Spring come reeling back to me,
spring come reeling back to me.
Never the same, this raining—
my body a northern pike stick-still
in olive water under ancient pines.
Acorns in the wood duck's craw,
acorns bobbing on the river. Moon
faces downward, upward—what of
worship? What of amnesia?
My body a brightened thing falling
stroke after stroke after stroke on
the list of glowing, perfect things.
The world spins off into the world:
groan of winter wolves beneath
the chimney's morning banner,
the lock's cold click behind the door,
weeds suddenly taller than the sky.

F. DANIEL RZICZNEK

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hundred-year event.) And even though the Corps had calculated that "design storm" before Betsy, based on milder hurricanes, it did not change those calculations after Betsy. The Corps concluded that upgrading its plan to defend against a Category Four storm like Betsy would be "cost-prohibitive," so its project was only designed to stop a Category Three. And as memories of Betsy faded, so did enthusiasm for even such minimal hurricane protection. By 1976, federal investigators found that the project's completion date had slipped thirteen years; by 1982, the estimated cost had soared 1,000 percent, and the end date was drifting toward the twenty-first century.

If the Corps had kicked and screamed and begged for more money to fight storms, it almost certainly could have gotten it. But as the federal investigators noted, the Corps never asked for more money for the hurricane project: "To the contrary, the Corps has not been able to use all moneys allocated." It focused more on political monstrosities such as the Red River navigation project, a $2 billion effort to tame the river for barges that never materialized. The notion of Category Five or even Category Four protections never seemed to occur to anyone in Congress or at the Corps.

In truth, one qualification must be entered against all this Corps- and Congress-bashing: the New Orleans Levee District, the city's representatives on flood-control issues, did not even want Category Three protection. In 1982, the district urged the Corps to "lower its design standards to provide more realistic hurricane protection," suggesting that one-hundred-year defenses would be fine. That is because unlike the river levees, which were fully funded by Uncle Sam under the MR&T, hurricane levees required a local cost-share. And the levee district preferred to spend its hard-earned cash on such necessities as riverboat gambling schemes and a $2.4 million Mardi Gras fountain.

The levee district's stinginess also forced the Corps to change its strategy for keeping Lake Pontchartrain's waters out of New Orleans. The Corps wanted to build floodgates across three drainage canals that stretched from the lake into the city, but the district did not want to pay the maintenance costs for the gates. So the district persuaded Long to enact language that forced the Corps to build higher floodwalls along the canals instead of gates that could have kept lake water out of the canals in the first place. The new plan invited the enemy to the city's doorstep, assuming that the Corps would keep it out. That was a fatal assumption.

Path of Destruction, *Breach of Faith*, and *The Storm* all do an admirable job of detailing the design flaws that left New Orleans underwater. Failing to build floodgates across the three drainage canals was probably the most serious error; the floodwalls along two of the canals collapsed during Katrina, even though they were never even overtopped. Those floodwalls were also built in overly mushy soils, without appropriate reinforcement. All these flaws were the Corps's fifth contribution to the catastrophe. And so New Orleans drowned.

IV.

One of the tragedy's nauseating aspects is that in recent years, the Louisiana delegation and the Corps began to see it coming, and considered action to try to prevent it. A bipartisan coalition of Louisiana politicians and interest groups launched a crusade to revive the region's coastal wetlands and worked with the Corps on a $14 billion restoration plan. Representative Tauzin took a break from chemotherapy to testify for the plan in 2004. "We'll be faced one day with thousands of our citizens drowned and killed, people drowned like rats in the city of New Orleans," he said. But Tauzin's support for the plan had not stopped him from leading the Republican push to dismantle federal wetlands protections. Similarly, at a hearing two months before Katrina, Senator Vitter showed a simulation of a Category Four hurricane drowning New Orleans under eighteen feet of water, but Vitter's support for the plan had not stopped him from writing legislation designed to help logging companies deforest Louisiana's cypress swamps.

The restoration plan went nowhere before Katrina; in fact, Vitter helped hold it up with his logging provision. The Corps is already struggling with a $10 billion restoration plan for the Everglades, which is inflaming doubts about the agency's ability to fix its ecological mistakes. Meanwhile, coastal Louisiana still loses a football field worth of wetlands every thirty minutes.

Wetlands were clearly a priority, but not a top priority. And the same was true of levees. During the Clinton administration, Tauzin got the Corps to assess the possibility of Category Five protections, and in 2002 the Corps recommended a five-year, $12 million feasibility study. Congress never funded it. In fact, on the eve of Katrina, the Corps was still a decade away from completing its original Category Three project; it warned on its website that the New Orleans levees might not even "withstand the design storm." And it is true that the Bush administration was stingy with the Corps. Louisiana Senator Mary Landrieu requested $98.7 million for the project in the five years before Katrina, while the administration proposed only $22.4 million.

At least the Bush administration was consistent: it also proposed zero funding for most of the few dozen most egregious Corps boondoggles. Somehow, though, the Louisiana delegation managed to override Bush's cuts when their pork was at stake. Congress poured $1.9 billion into Corps projects in Louisiana in those five pre-Katrina years, by far the most of any state. If the delegation's top priority had been protection instead of pork, it could have gotten what it wanted. When a Corps study concluded that the cost of a New Iberia port-deepening project would be three times the benefits, Landrieu tucked a provision into an emergency funding bill for the Iraq War that ordered the Corps to redo its analysis. She didn't do that for Category Five levees. So Katrina did not change everything. It still may not have changed anything.

The Corps initially claimed that its levees had been overtopped and overwhelmed, then refused to address its culpability until New Orleans was off the front page. Vitter and Landrieu organized a "working group" of lobbyists for ports, shipping firms, energy companies, and other corporate interests to assemble Louisiana's relief request; the inflation-adjusted result would have cost more than the Louisiana Purchase. It included $40 billion for Corps projects, including the Industrial Canal lock, the New Iberia port-deepening, and other hurricane-unrelated pork. A list of "outstanding questions" from one working-group call included such pressing questions as "How much can I bill my client?"

This time the looters went too far. Congress sent the delegation back to the drawing board. A year after its aggravated assault, New Orleans remains in intensive care. The Corps is rebuilding its failed levees to their original Category Three strength. And the Big One is still on the way. ■

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

The Children of Qana

THE KILLING OF CHILDREN, any children, is an evil. Those who are responsible for the death of children in war are responsible for an evil. To think otherwise is surely a depravity. There can be no absolution for such an act in nationalism or in religion, though both are plentiful with extenuations of the misdeeds of members and believers. In wartime, when arguments are made more to fortify than to instruct, such extenuations abound. Sometimes they are made in good faith, sometimes not. In wartime, intellectual life is generally degraded into apologetics—for our side or their side, for the right side or the wrong side, but apologetics. Nothing more decisively exposes the sterility of such discourse, its fear of the ethical ambiguities in human conflict, its confusion of rightness with innocence, than the destruction of children. It shames realists and it shames idealists—all believe that a war may be analyzed without a moral vocabulary, because it is an affair of power or because it is already just.

BUT IS NOT THE EVALUATION OF A WAR in terms of its justice a practice of conscience? In the beginning, it is; but the sensation of one's virtue also has a hardening effect. A war must not only start just, it must also stay just. A just war can lose its justice. For this reason, conscience must be as dynamic as the battlefield, and moral assessments as regular and as alert (but not as nimble!) as tactical assessments, or else the invocation of justice is only a device for easing the lives of cynics. Of course, for those who think that all wars are evil, that war is itself the evil, such perplexities do not exist: the killing of children merely confirms what they already know, it is only a smaller crime in a greater crime. But this pristinity cannot account for historical experience, which shows that some wars have been just and some wars unjust, even though all wars have been cruel. Not every war is like World War I, even if every war seems the same, and senseless, when it is considered from the standpoint of tragedy. But there is tragedy even, or especially, in moral situations. All good wars are also bad wars.

THE QUESTION OF THE KILLING OF CHILDREN in a just war is not the same as the question of the killing of children in an unjust war. It is easy to arrive at moral clarity about the evil done in a wrong cause. A wrong war must be opposed even when no such outrages occur, even when it is conducted with humanitarian diligence. But a right war in which such outrages occur—surely it is not enough to refresh one's sense of the admirable nature of one's principles and be done. The fact that you are not a monster is beside the point when you have just done something monstrous. One should not be consoled for one's misdeeds, one should regret them; and regret is genuine only when it is beyond the reach of consolation. If your guilt reminds you of how otherwise guiltless you are, then you have not been improved by the discovery of your sin, you have been corrupted by it. It is important also to be wary of the pride of self-criticism. *At least we worry about such things*: this proves only that the standard is low. To congratulate oneself upon the severity of one's self-reckoning is to vitiate it—to nullify conscience by reference to its very exercise.

I AM THINKING OF THE CHILDREN WHO were killed by an Israeli airstrike in Qana. Since I support the Israeli war against Hezbollah, I have a duty to admit that I support a war in which such catastrophes happen. This is difficult; but the brutal truth is that it is not impossible. This hurts my brain. For Qana is not all I need to know about the war. Conscience is not the enemy of intelligence, and there is more about this conflict, about any conflict, that is pertinent to moral analysis. The exterminationist objective of Israel's adversary and of its adversary's patron, the rain of rockets launched precisely to kill non-combatants, the deployment of its arsenal in the thick of its own population: these, too, are facts of moral significance. For Hezbollah, the murder of innocents, in Israel and in Lebanon, is its strategy. And so I am not embarrassed by Israeli power, or by its use against this particular enemy. I notice also that some people who denounce the loss of life on the Lebanese side of the border are reticent about the loss of life on the Israeli side of the border. Perhaps more Israeli deaths would restore a perverse kind of moral parity, and correct their asymmetrical hearts.

ANYWAY, IT APPEARS THAT IN OUR humanitarianism we are all hypocrites. We all have our more acceptable and less acceptable victims. (I recall from a decade ago that people who spoke loudly against the killing of children by Serbian snipers in Sarajevo spoke softly or not at all against the killing of children by NATO planes in Belgrade.) This is ugly, but in a cold way it makes sense, if you agree that there are things worth dying for and killing for. I am not doing either the killing or the dying, obviously; but none of us are. I do not see that we are therefore disqualified from our causes. We are, for one reason or another, insulated from the consequences of most of our opinions. But the certification of the justice or injustice of a war is not a professional activity. There are no experts in the calculation of the relations of means and ends, of costs and purposes. The "proportionality" that is supposed to settle these matters is not a scientific measure. It remains for us to reason, even about horrors.

I DO NOT SEE THAT ONE CAN FAIRLY oppose the Israeli campaign against Hezbollah without asking a state to acquiesce in a mortal danger to itself, and a region to acquiesce in the ascendancy of jihadism. The weakening of Hezbollah would amount to the strengthening of Israel, the strengthening of Lebanon, and the weakening of Iran. This seems like a fine strategic result and a fine moral result. It might even permit us to talk again of peace. (Remember peace?) I do not wish to defend every one of Israel's strikes, some of which worsen the situation that they are designed to improve; and I understand that six hundred civilian deaths are six hundred too many. These are not tender times. I am not trying to talk myself into accepting the deaths of the children of Qana. I am trying to talk myself into not accepting them, whatever that means. But it isn't working. I see no escape from the distinction between moralism and morality. Moralism is a denial of the actual conditions of moral and historical action. It is a way of protecting morality from the knowledge of the world. Whether or not this sounds complacent, I believe it.

LEON WIESELTIER

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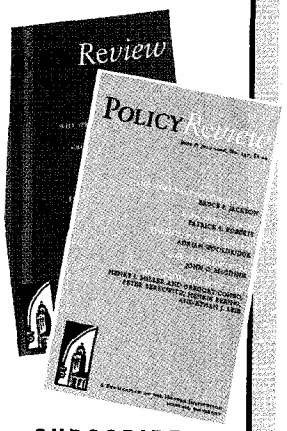

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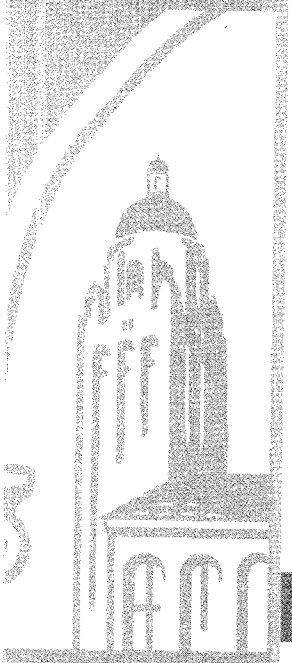

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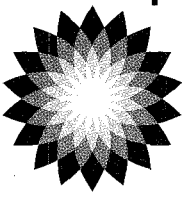

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